

月が導く異世界道中

Tsukiga Michibiku Isekai Dochu

6

Azumi Kei

あずみ圭



「先生…! バトルが
したいです…」

…って、そんな教え請われても、
僕の本業、商人なんですけど…
しかも、夏休み返上なの!?

拝啓、
父さん、母さん。
生徒からの人気が
うなぎ登りで
困ってます…!

大ヒット!

累計 20万部!

アルファポリス

薄幸系男子の異世界ファンタジー、待望の第6巻!!

Tsuki ga Michibiku Isekai Douchuu

(月が導く異世界道中)

Volume 06

Fifth Tome

Labyrinth of Lorel

Azumi Kei

(あずみ 圭)

Story Description:

High school student Misumi Makoto is called into a fantasy world by the goddess Tsukuyomi, in order to be a hero. However, the Goddess of this world isn't as thrilled to have him there, and they kick him to the edge of the world just as Tsukuyomi declares that she must leave him to find his own way. Now it's up to him to find his own way!

Original Story can be found here: [Link](#)

Chapter 232: Everyday life and the town's state

The street that denotes the metropolis of Aion kingdom and the name of that very metropolis, Bozuda.

In that city which I had vague recollections of its name until recently, there was a military force uprising that occurred around 1 month ago, demanding the change of the throne.

It was already known that there would be a revolution occurring, and the preparations had gone smoothly. Just that...from the possibilities that Rembrandt-san spoke of, the use of a military force uprising was the one which had the lowest chance to begin the revolution in the capital.

Putting it more accurately, the chances of it occurring was the lowest and it is the one which had the lowest possibility of succeeding, but it was the choice that had the highest effect.

In outline, the result was a failure.

They couldn't kill the king, and they couldn't seize the capital either.

But the people that launched the beacon of revolution managed to withdraw.

The royal family was driven to a corner, but somehow pushed the revolution back and escaped from the predicament.

Tomoe checked out the situation, but when she arrived, the coup d'etat side was already taking flight. From the information gathered, we learned that around 80% of the districts and castle surroundings had been seized, but for some reason, the situation of the battle changed and the kingdom's army pushed them back all at once.

Moreover, in a prompt and strong manner that made it feel like the battle until then had been a lie.

What a mysterious thing.

Maybe strong reinforcements arrived, or they used some sort of national

treasure-level magic tool.

Tsige has judged that's the reason.

And Rembrandt-san had confirmed that the military force of the people plotting the revolution was bigger than he estimated.

It seems like it was completely unexpected that they were thinking about bringing down the castle at once, and that they possessed the power to manage this in the blink of an eye.

If that really did happen, within all that chaos and civil war occurring, the play of Tsige's independence wouldn't be able to come true.

They would have to change their methods to propping up from the chaos, and at that time, it would only turn into a fight of a town against a nation, so our demands wouldn't be able to get through at all.

Well, we learned that the kingdom has some sort of trump card which is information that can be useful, and this trump card was only used when they were cornered and almost lost.

Whether it was outside interference or a magic tool, it shouldn't be something they can count on so easily.

It was a surprising beginning, but from the first match, there was a lot of information to gain.

"I was tense thinking that it would end from the very beginning, but...it seems like it was just as Tsige predicted, a stalemate. And now it is turning into a muddy situation. Aion has already fallen into a complete state of civil war." (Tomoe)

I was at Tsige, in my private room at the Kuzunoha company.

Lately, my time here had grown longer.

There, Tomoe was summarizing things as if having fun.

It has been one month since the revolution had begun.

The civil wars still continue.

Tsige declared independence towards Aion kingdom.

Of course, the Aion kingdom didn't forgive this.

After that, the revolution force also declared independence from Aion kingdom.

No matter where Aion tries to solve first, Tsige had shown their will to manage it themselves.

Of course, the people that caused the revolution didn't accept this declaration either.

In other words, Tsige was in a situation where the kingdom and the revolution army were saying: 'your place is mine, so don't go doing whatever you want'.

"What was their reaction in regards to Tsige?" (Makoto)

"There's been differences showing slowly. From the kingdom, they revoked the declaration of independence and gave out an executive order. They ordered a feudal lord -that's all name only- to make Tsige accept the government, and there have been entreaties send constantly." (Tomoe)

"The feudal lord is already weeping, but the kingdom's attitude didn't change much huh." (Makoto)

"And regarding the people that caused the uprising...they said something about green-prairies and so on and so forth..." (Tomoe)

"So on and so forth'? Tomoe, you weren't interested at all?" (Makoto)

"None at all. Their sword skills, government ability, and magic, are all on the level of an ordinary person, and they don't have the ability to attract people like the heroes do. The leader of this revolution is a person that doesn't fulfill a single one of the requirements in his position. He is literally a decoration. Even if those guys were to obtain the country, the country's name will continue being Aion kingdom, and I don't really care whatever happens." (Tomoe)

"I-I see. And so, what was their reaction?" (Makoto)

"They said that they didn't mind a certain amount of autonomy, so come to their side, is the kind of attitude they changed into." (Tomoe)

What a soft change.

In a situation where Aion has been divided by north and south, and fighting, Tsige is at the tip of the west.

In terms of military power, the coup d'etat side is stronger.

The fact that this kind of fighting is still continuing is proof that their plans have been moving the way they wanted.

The kingdom's force at the west side was crushed by the revolution force from the east side.

It seems like there were feudal lords that escaped, and I have created a list of names of those people, so I am thinking about showing that list to the Anslan sisters that are doing their best at the north.

Nobles seldom escape, but there were a good amount that did.

Abandoning their people and land in all this helter-skelter.

Yeah, let's just think that Aion is right now in their closing years.

"...It still hasn't reached the point where they accept the independence huh. This part would depend on Rembrandt-san and Tsige's congress though." (Makoto)

"The surroundings lands have already accepted the independence of Tsige on the surface. They are requesting for the same relationship they have had, so from now on, it is the time where Tsige should be showing their moves." (Tomoe)

"From what Mio said, the port town wants to enter the protection of Tsige. Aion kingdom is truly unpopular to the point of being pitiful." (Makoto)

"I have plans on going to that port town, Koran. As a member of this town's company, I have to work a little bit after all." (Tomoe)

"I am counting on you. I will check out the Adventurer Guild and confirm the progress of the battle, and tomorrow, I will head to Academy town. This is a different type of busy than I thought, but not having time for leisure is the same." (Makoto)

“The fires of war reaching the town of Tsige at this early of a stage means that Rembrandt and Sairitz’ plans were completely mistaken. That in itself is interesting, but I feel like the burden of Waka will increase again...” (Tomoe)

“...Please stop that. That isn’t interesting at all. Be careful, okay?”
(Makoto)

“Well then, I will be going. I will be participating in this night’s meeting, so see you later.” (Tomoe)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

Tomoe leaves the room.

I look at the outside.

The sky, the town, the usual street; a blue sky that stretches far and wide, a town that is filled with hustle and bustle.

It really doesn’t look like a town that has declared independence and is in the middle of a war with both the kingdom and the revolution side.

At the very least, I didn’t think it would turn into an everyday life like this.

I did get an outline in the meetings that something like this could happen, but I didn’t expect it would proceed exactly as it was explained.

The towns close to this one, and the neighbouring feudal lord that is aiming for Tsige; they didn’t show any signs of attacking this town.

...That’s not it.

Accurately speaking, it would be that they weren’t allowed to attack.

Just as I told Tomoe, I began moving.

While looking at the state of the store, I go down to the first floor and left to the street.

At the first floor, there’s a part where there’s a stand for food and drinks by Mio’s suggestion, but this one has such high popularity that we are thinking about making a new entrance in order to reduce congestion.

Even though it is still forenoon, there's already a line of people that were trying to avoid the congestion and came here to buy their lunch in advance... They couldn't avoid the congestion.

With that amount of customers, at peak time, I would have to make the customers cooperate as well in order to make the serving faster.

In the mornings it gets crowded, so...it is truly great that we don't offer Sake as well and serve until late night.

My employees will die of exhaustion, seriously.

I pass to the side of the line as I bow my head a few times, and hurry to the Adventurer Guild.

As always, this town is prospering with adventurers that aim for the wasteland and the rare raw materials that they bring with them.

That liveliness had not darkened at all.

This is also just as Rembrandt-san said.

In terms of the number of adventurers, their numbers are actually higher than when the war had begun.

Truly unbelievable.

"Eh? Isn't that Raidou-san?! How unusual for you to be on your own!"

Oh.

Suddenly at the crowd of people in front of me, someone had called me.

This voice is...

"Toa-san. Long time no see. You as well, it is rare to see you on your own." (Makoto)

"Everyone is out you see. We got work from the town, so we are taking a bit of a rest." (Toa)

"From the town, huh." (Makoto)

"Yeah. Meaning that this town still has no plans on dispatching people yet." (Toa)

“Thanks for the hard work. Then, are you heading to the Adventurer Guild? Were you planning on returning to your main profession?”
(Makoto)

“I will go to the guild, but it is not like I will be returning to my main profession. I probably won’t be able to head to the wasteland until this matter is settled. Right now I don’t have any objective to be so hurried to go to the wasteland anyways.” (Toa)

“...I see. I personally want the adventurers to continue associating with Tsige as adventurers, but since it is an emergency, it just can’t go that way huh.” (Makoto)

“In the end, we are simply swords after all. No matter how efficient we are, we can’t become shields, and we can’t serve as substitutes either. The worry of inferior people.” (Toa)

“Anyways, since we are going to the same place, how about we go together?” (Makoto)

“With pleasure.” (Toa)

Her expression darkens.

In Tsige, they are the adventurer party that have brought the highest achievements and are evaluated as having high fighting ability. And they are currently cooperating with this town.

There are parties aside from hers that have taken this as a request from the guild, as well as other direct outside parties that have accepted to cooperate in this fight.

Their role is to attack.

Just as Toa-san said, adventurers are pros that are specialized in offensive.

Frankly speaking, they are not that good at defensive battles.

Even if I say ‘not good’ that doesn’t mean they are not able to, but the problem would be how much percentage of their power they would be able to bring out in a defensive fight.

That's why Rembrandt-san and the congress of this town are investing in them as a surprise attack unit.

I think that's the correct choice as well.

If it's stealth jobs or attacking units that are stationed far away, Shiki or Mio can teleport the adventurers to those places.

Instead of going through front fights, they attack supplies and go for surprise attacks as they annihilate the troops.

In terms of results, just as Toa-san said, it is practically a perfect score.

There hasn't been a single unit that has been able to arrive at Tsige.

As long as there's the need to march here, the other side knows that when they reach a certain distance from the town, it will be catastrophic.

"A defensive force huh." (Makoto)

"Private units from the major companies have been gathered and created something like that, but...honestly speaking, it still makes me anxious." (Toa)

"Are their skills good?" (Makoto)

"Of course. But in this task, it is indispensable to have people with a lot of experience in defensive battles. We are continuing in a state where we haven't experienced this kind of battle, so when the time really comes when it is truly necessary..." (Toa)

"If a defensive unit is formed, the amount of people that can be rotated to offensive can increase, and it will give us a higher advantage in the negotiations when having the others accept the independence. It is certainly true that it is something good though." (Makoto)

But it won't be so easy.

People that have a lot of experience in defensive battles, moreover, talented people that are not tied in the military of other places. Even I can tell that this is something quite difficult to find.

"For me who has bought a house in this town and am thinking about

living for a long time in it with my sister, this is a point that bothers me a lot. Raidou-san, don't you actually have candidates?" (Toa)

"I don't. What's that 'actually' supposed to mean?" (Makoto)

"I thought that from that coat's pocket, you would place your hand inside it and say: 'Ara, there's a defense unit in a place like this'." (Toa)

Just what kind of blue futuristic cat do you take me for?

"If I could do that, I would though. Ah, we arrived at the guild."
(Makoto)

"Right. You have gained popularity so suddenly, so it probably would be troublesome for you if people were to see you together with me. Well then, see you later." (Toa)

"Please give my thanks to Rinon. Tell her that I thank her for always taking care of Komoe." (Makoto)

"Understood!" (Toa)

Now then...

I have somewhat understood the situation of the war from the information Toa-san gave me, but...currently, the adventurers are the only military force of Tsige, so I wonder just how long we will be able to maintain this status quo.

"Raidou-sama!!"

"Uwa?!"

Is today the day to shout my name?

For some reason, my name was suddenly called.

A person from the guild huh.

"We were about to send a person to look for you. Rembrandt-sama and the others are waiting for you upstairs. You have time, right?"

"Ah yeah, I do. Just that, I don't remember having any sort of appointment today though." (Makoto)

“It is an emergency situation and they said that they wanted to know your opinion on it.”

“Understood.” (Makoto)

Rembrandt-san is in the Adventurer Guild?

I don't think he would need my opinion in such a hurry if it were related to a problem in the discussions for the independence, so did something occur that requires the need for the Kuzunoha company?

I have not stood on the front stage that much, but I have decided to move at the side of Tsige in this matter.

No matter the case, I will just have to go and see.

Tsige is in the middle of war as they aim for independence.

Kuzunoha Company and I are living an everyday life that's pretty busy right now.

Chapter 233: Tsige's move

“That’s fast. Even though we send someone to look for you just a second ago.”

When I was led to the room, those were the first words directed at me.

Inside the place, there were several people gathered there with maps and graphs.

The owner of the voice is Rembrandt-san.

He must be facing deadly busy days, and yet, for some reason, his face felt as if its gloss had gotten better.

I remember he once said: ‘When it gets incredibly busy, it reminds me of the past and that really makes me feel young’. Was he not joking but actually serious?

“I thought about checking out the Guild. There doesn’t to be any big changes in the situation of the battle though... Is there any urgent business?” (Makoto)

There’s one big round table inside the room.

Currently, this room in the Adventurer Guild is used to decided the tactics of Tsige and the government of it, as well as deciding the direction of the town.

The reason is because this place has higher security compared to any company (aside ours).

Depending on the location, there’s places inside the Adventurer Guild that have become secretive spots thanks to the mischievousness of a certain Superior Dragon.

They can repel most magic, and it is physically impossible to peek or hear the inside.

It is the most suitable place to talk about confidential stuff.

If that’s the case, the other countries would also curry for the cooperation of the Guild and have them lend them that place, but that’s

the problem.

The inside of the Adventurer Guild that is the subtenant of several countries but is not controlled by any country.

It seems like the bigger the country is, the less they are able to do confidential talks there.

That's what Root said as he laughed.

If it is requested for, the place would be lend, and the Adventurer Guild doesn't have any intentions of leaking the information to the outside, but...only to the outside, that is. He said that if the information served as an advantage for the Guild, he would use that information as much as he wanted.

It is fine for him to move himself, and it is also fine to have the adventurers move.

He probably meant that there's no need to leak it to other countries, there's still a lot of ways to utilize that information.

So that's why, no matter how much the information of the country doesn't leak out, there's practically no occasions where the adventurer guild is used.

But in Tsige's case, no matter what it is heard, there's no hostility towards the adventurer guild. On top of that, they are already in a situation where they have to rely on adventurers for their military force.

If it were a meeting that established the objectives of every company, it would be one thing, but if it's a meeting that decides the objective of the town, there's no problem with whatever it is heard.

Actually, as long as they pay attention to the members that attend the meeting, there's no need to fear about being eavesdropped, which is a big merit.

That's why they asked the adventurer guild to lend them this one room.

It was easily decided that they wouldn't be using the building they have been using for their meetings. It seems like there were various points that

brought uneasiness regarding the utilization of that place, mainly in the point of security.

By the way, regarding this room, the adventurer guild in Tsige seems to be pretty strict about protecting the information connected to the wasteland.

Root's style of cutting off the ears and eyes of the walls.

It seems like if someone tries to eavesdrop, they will experience something terrible.

Terrible enough to pray for the spies –or better called as victims.

“I see. First of all, we have received a letter from Koran requesting an alliance –or rather, a request for protection. I wanted to hear your opinion regarding this.” (Rembrandt)

“My opinion, is it.” (Makoto)

News that are pretty recent.

It is information that I heard just a few moments ago after all.

Rembrandt-san nods and continues his talk.

“You see, since we wouldn't be able to continue treating them the same as the other towns because of this, our opinions of how we should deal with this has been divided.” (Rembrandt)

...

Is that so.

We would be required to protect them after all.

It is not simply a talk about allying with them.

In other words, Koran is requesting Tsige to let them stand at their back.

That means, if Tsige were to agree with this, Tsige would have to deal with the people that have complains with Koran and the ones that try to put their hands on them.

Ah, this is indeed complicated.

I can understand why there's divided opinions.

If we were to hurry, it would take one day, if they were to mobilize normally, it would take around two or three days to arrive; even so, it is still a different town.

The burden will increase quite a lot.

"It is certainly true that if we were to take Koran under us, we would create an opening. I feel like it is natural for everyone to have divided opinions." (Makoto)

"Umu. We are literally divided in a group of yes and no. There's even people that think this is a method of the enemy to destroy us from the inside. Even so, taking too much time considering this, is evidently a bad move. I was wondering what we should do." (Rembrandt)

"Ah, so that's why Tsige sent envoys to Koran, right? In order to learn their true intentions." (Makoto)

"That's right. Koran is the neighboring town, moreover, a port town. If they are already enemies of ours, it would be as if the blade of our enemies had already approached our throats. We can't lower our guards."
(Rembrandt)

Meaning that, Rembrandt-san is prioritizing the dangers that creating a relationship with Koran will bring forth.

Thinking about providing them protection will come after this point is taken care of first.

I see.

But honestly, I don't think that town would turn their fangs towards Tsige.

Koran is currently prospering as a neighboring port town, but not that long in the past, it was a small town that was comparable to other port towns.

To the point that calling them a fishing village was fitting.

The reason this place made a complete turn-over was because Mio went

to that town, and then, not long after, Shiki and the Eldwas also went as well and brought fortune to the sea.

Even now, our company still buys quite a lot from that town, and there's a few that are training in shipbuilding at that place too.

In a town like that where I receive reports from so many people inside it, there's no way there's the shadow of another country. Not only that, they most likely hold the same amount of autonomy as Tsige.

They are quite good willed. It is certainly true that it is bothering that they want Tsige to provide them protection in their future association, but I don't think they would be doing something that would set up Tsige.

...No, that's not it.

Even if that's the case, Rembrandt-san wants clear evidence which is why he sent an envoy there.

Whatever it is that is bothering him and making him cautious, it would be bad to simply believe in someone like me.

If it's about the current situation of Koran, Rembrandt-san and the others who are here, probably already know about it anyways.

"It is not like we have won independence already, so I think that going at it cautiously is the correct answer. Koran is pretty good willed on the surface, so when the suspicions are gone and the independence becomes a certainty, there shouldn't be any problems in taking them under our protection." (Makoto)

I at least tell them that they look good willed.

It seems like the Neptunes have been going to those parts of the sea as well after all.

I don't know how the inside of the sea works, but from what Serwhale-san and the others say, the sea of Koran is a good place, kind of like a resort.

"...Hoh~, Koran is good willed huh. Now that I think about it, Kuzunoha company has been going there to buy marine products, right?"

A representative from a different company, who has jewels and crystals adorning his clothes and possesses influence, enters the conversation.

A man in his fifties, short build but has good personal appearance. Because of that, he has a gentle atmosphere at first glance.

But his eyes are scary.

Narrow eyes as if seeing through you.

I heard that he is the third or whatever, but it seems like he is quite the able person.

I received the information of everyone from Tomoe, and I remember I got scared by how accurate the atmosphere of everyone was described.

If I remember correctly, his name was Schirra-san.

“Y-Yeah. This time as well, within the envoys that were sent, there’s one of my employees accompanying them.” (Makoto)

“Her name was Tomoe-dono, right?” (Schirra)

“Yes.”

“There’s past records stating that Kuzunoha company has done previous negotiations with Koran without much problems, so I am looking forward...to the results of how they clear away the suspicions towards Koran.” (Schirra)

Hm, in other words, Schirra-san is on the side that approves of letting them under our protection?

That must be it, right? If he were against it, he would have just said to be careful and there would be no talk at all.

“Schirra-dono is in favor of having Koran under our protection?” (Makoto)

I confirm just in case.

“Yeah. The crystal corals that appear in that town at times have a strong resistance against water element and it is not a bad addition to armors. In the past, our place acted slightly violently and have been prohibited to

enter Koran. I was thinking about fixing our relationship with this chance.” (Schirra)

Slightly violent.

It is definitely not slightly. Being banned from entering the town, just what did they do?

“We simply thought about buying the crystals from the fishermen that seemed to be troubled with their meals though. But it seems like for some reason, there was a misunderstanding somewhere. Hahaha.” (Schirra)

They probably tried to buy them at 10% of their market price.

It is certainly true that if he contributes to this matter, it can become a good chance to fix their relationship.

At any rate, crystal corals huh.

Our place only goes there to buy food sea products, and we practically don't buy things like raw materials.

“Is that so. I also feel like if we can just achieve the goal of independence, we can get along with Koran. It would be great if both of our companies were able to create mutual prosperity for both towns, right?” (Makoto)

“...Yeah. It is just as you say. Even if this was something caused by my family predecessor, we have already reflected on our actions. Now then, please send my regards to the people of Koran.” (Schirra)

Schirra-san showed surprise for a second at my words, but he soon showed a smile and spoke out words of agreement.

And then, after a bow, he returned to the round table where the map is spread out.

“Can I, Raidou-dono?” (Rembrandt)

“Go ahead.” (Makoto)

“Raidou-dono, do you think that there's no betrayal from Koran?”
(Rembrandt)

“I don’t have any conclusive proof, but that’s the impression I get. But even I can tell that it would be dangerous to take upon Koran in this current state where the matter of independence is still left hanging, so I consider that Rembrandt-san’s thoughts of being cautious are sound.”
(Makoto)

“I see. There’s been two points that have been bothering me. Why is Koran, who is having a radical growth, going through the trouble of requesting for the protection of Tsige even when they should know how dangerous that move is?” (Rembrandt)

“...”

That’s a part that’s been bothering me too.

Normally, that’s the part where they would say: ‘let’s get along from now on, and even if you are to get the independence or not, let’s continue a relationship without any changes’. Saying that, they would be able to create a safe secret agreement for themselves.

Tsige would be okay with that as well.

“And the other point is...this is a bit hard to say, but I thought that the sparks this matter will create, will not only bring damage to Tsige but to others as well.” (Rembrandt)

“Eh?”

This is the first time I have heard of this.

“If we brought that place down, it could become a beachhead for Tsige after all. But that town has not received a single damage at all. Even though they shouldn’t have a satisfactory military force either. Their excessive pleading to Tsige, in a situation where they haven’t suffered any damage yet. It would be hard to not suspect that.” (Rembrandt)

“Y-Yes.” (Makoto)

“But it seems like Raidou-dono sees something different. Waiting for the envoys, and depending on whether the report makes my worries unnecessary, I might end up stepping into the wrong path. If I were to

choose the wrong path at this point, the town will fall to ruin. It is certainly true that our relationship with Koran has been good lately. If Koran is really only thinking about being under our protection, there's no doubt it would be an option that's plenty enough to take into consideration." (Rembrandt)

Maybe Rembrandt-san tried to see through what I 'am seeing', his eyes had become sharp like the eyes of Schirra-san.

Stop it please.

I have faced plenty enough of that with Zara-san.

My trauma will resurface.

"W-Well, I really don't have any conclusive proof though. You see, Koran and Tsige are like the boundaries to the wasteland anyways." (Makoto)

"Hm, if we are to talk in a broad manner, then yeah, you are right. We both are at the west border of Aion. Even if we are slightly separated from each other, the difference is whether one is up and down; whether we are close to the sea; or how close we are to the wasteland." (Rembrandt)

"Then why don't we just make ramparts covering both towns and combine it into one town?" (Makoto)

"Tsige and Koran?!" (Rembrandt)

"Tsige is troubled by the lack of land, and we have already picked a fight with the country. If we were to increase the length of the Golden Highway to Koran, the population will be able to increase by many times more..... wait, just what am I saying? Not even in Rotsgard, there's a town with such a scale." (Makoto)

If we were to group up the Academy Town with all the surrounding towns, it would be quite vast, but each town is not that big.

Or more like, just what am I saying?

What a stupid thing.

This world is completely different to modern Japan.

There's no way they would be able to create a town that's too big.

"Becoming one...till Koran. No, but such a thing is.....if only we could solve that problem...but, could it be..." (Rembrandt)

"R-Rembrandt-san? Sorry, I remembered something I had to do..." (Makoto)

"...Wait, my business was an extra to begin with. Sorry but, can you please go to the room that's two spaces neighboring here? I want you to lend me some more of your time." (Rembrandt)

"Okay. But..." (Makoto)

Rembrandt-san, who was spacing out, stopped me from leaving.

Even though I said something so embarrassing that I would jump into a hole if there was one!

"Sairitz-dono is waiting at that place. It seems like she has something to talk regarding the matter of Tsige's 'shield'. She said to please have Raidou-dono come. Sorry, but please." (Rembrandt)

He brings his face close to me and whispers.

Rembrandt-san voiced out that name; the name of the empress of Lorel Union who is moving in the shadows of Tsige's independence.

This is the real reason of calling me.

I can't just run away because of embarrassment.

This is a concern that the adventurer Toa-san was worried about.

Well, I will be able to escape from Rembrandt-san anyways.

"...Understood. Then, I will be leaving now." (Makoto)

"Umu. Sorry for troubling you..... A town that you can walk from one end to the other in one day. In this wasteland, not only would we be able to obtain large amounts of land, we would even obtain a sea..... Is this...the time to place our hand in the fire even when knowing the dangers of it?" (Rembrandt)

Leaving Rembrandt-san who was still muttering something, I head to the

room where Sairitz-san is supposed to be waiting in.

Chapter 234: That shield is deep underground

“Picnic Rose Garden?”

What an incredibly fun-sounding name.

And it is also such an unfitting name, I unconsciously said it again.

“Yes. That’s the name of the group. The problem is that they are in Lorel, but are a force that doesn’t have intentions of being attached to a specific country.” (Sairitz) Sairitz-san welcomed me happily when I entered the room, and after guiding me to my seat, she immediately said that name.

It seems like it is a mercenary group that has high ability and excels at defense.

Even so, they are not participating in the war.

What’s with that?

Be it their name or their attitude, they are quite the shady group.

In the first place, is a mercenary group able to get a decent amount of money if they don’t participate in the war?

“And you are saying they will ally with Tsige as it currently is?” (Makoto) “It is at a stage where there’s the possibility.” (Sairitz) Sairitz-san shakes her head to the sides in regret.

“I heard that you had Rembrandt-san call me specifically. Why is that?” (Makoto) For now, I don’t see much reason as to why this should be related to me.

In the first place, the mercenary group is staying at Lorel, so I don’t have much understanding.

Rather than me, I think that these are circumstances where Sairitz-san would have it easier than me.

“They are a slightly special existence in Lorel Union. They possess an ancestry with the Wise.” (Sairitz) “Wise...” (Makoto)

She means Japanese people.

Accurately speaking, she refers to the people that come from the same world as me, but after investigating, I can only think Wise are Japanese. If that's not the case, they were people that possessed a lot of Asian characteristics.

Thinking about the special culture that has taken root in Lorel, it is practically settled that they were Japanese.

"Sairitz-sama, I have told you this before but...I am..." (Makoto) "You are not a Wise, right? Yes, I understand. But in my eyes, Raidou-sama has enough traits to mistake you for a Wise-sama. The aforementioned mercenary group has strong faith towards the Wise because of their Wise ancestry, you see. If Raidou-sama were to go meet them, I think the conversation will go well. I -Sairitz- am sure of this." (Sairitz) ...

Wise huh.

I have heard this word many times already, but there's no doubt that's a word denoting Japanese people.

It seems like Lorel Union has been politely inviting the people that have slipped into this world to their country (not sure if that's really the case though).

And by doing that, it affected the country's culture as well.

For the people of Lorel Union, the Wise are special existences.

Yeah, how to say it...

"That's why it is me? Moreover, right now?" (Makoto) "Yes."

Sairitz-san responds immediately with a smile.

The Aion revolution is currently in a lull state, and from what I know, the matter of Koran is not a big problem.

Tsige currently wants military force that can serve for their defense.

If it were a small matter like going to the Academy to teach lessons, there would be no need for hesitation, but to go all the way to Lorel and

negotiate with the mercenary group, and then bringing them here. That's a big job.

But...it is true that if we are to move, it has to be now.

Even if I can come and go from there to Tsige, I would still have to stay at Lorel for several days.

Sairitz-san, who still has that saint-like smile on her face, didn't avert her eyes from me.

It is a face I can't handle well.

For me who has been locked on by her since the time at the Academy festival and told to go to her country.

Honestly speaking, I feel like it will be very troublesome.

If only these insecurities weren't in the way, it is true that I would like to go to Lorel.

“Uhm, Sairitz-sama, I do think as well that it would be beneficial to negotiate with that mercenary group. Thinking about the situation of Tsige, I can't leave for so long, and I think it will be difficult to have a prolonged leave from the country.” (Makoto) “Of course, I am not thinking about doing any formal event. Our priestess Chiya-sama is currently not in the country, and a person that serves as a replacement has not been elected either. It is disheartening that we are unable to entertain you adequately. You visiting our country is also one of our objectives, so in this time around, I was thinking about asking you to travel incognito. It may not be much in return, but I will do the best I can to accommodate the movements of the people of Kuzunoha company.” (Sairitz) I was going to tell her to please spare me any stiffening events like the time when I went to Limia, but a joyful proposal was made.

...Fumu.

In that case, I would be able to go quickly and return quickly, probably.

I really do have a slight interest in Lorel, but with the situation of Tsige, there's no time for that.

If it's a negotiation with a mercenary group, it will probably be done in a few days.

Information of Kuzunoha company is relayed to me in real time, so in case anything happens, I can return immediately.

If I don't need to worry about any strange entanglement with the country, this proposal of hers is valid.

Yeah.

"...You don't mind it being incognito?" (Makoto)

"That's right. I will prepare a promissory note by the time of your departure, so when you show that, you will be able to go anywhere you wish, Raidou-sama. I will also strongly order them to refrain doing any excessive reception. Of course, I will do my best to make it possible for Raidou-sama to make contact with the places and people that you get interested in." (Sairitz) "Ah, there's no need to go that far." (Makoto)

Being given too many privileges will make me stand out instead.

Just being able to freely walk in a foreign country is already a pretty big deal.

"No. Right now Lorel and I have been unable to give back anything worthy of repayment to Raidou-sama." (Sairitz) "Eh?" (Makoto)

"You have saved Chiya-sama and I several times... That's how I feel." (Sairitz) "Haha..." (Makoto)

"And now then, about the place where the mercenary group, Picnic Rose Garden, are using as their base." (Sairitz) "Ah, yes." (Makoto)

It is probably in the capital.

I know.

That's always how it is.

It seems like that group has a lot of freedom, but there's no doubt that Sairitz-san wants to invite me to the capital, so behind that smile of hers with no openings, she is definitely going to do something.

Lorel's capital. If I remember correctly, the name's Naoi.

Sairitz-san spreads out a map of Lorel as I was searching in my memories.

“ ... ”

I unconsciously gulped.

What she had spread out, was a pretty detailed map of Lorel Union.

Towns, roads, and even the topography was shown.

The current me understands the worth of this.

...There's no doubt that this map also shows confidential information of the country.

This may be too late since I have already seen it but, I feel like I have been trapped in her scheme.

It feels as if I am being led to her pace.

“Our Lorel wants to have a good relationship with the Kuzunoha company and Raidou-sama. If possible, we want to have a long lasting equivalent relationship. So for us, disclosing this amount of information is a given. Please don't mind it.” (Sairitz) “I also think that would be great. But it seems like your priestess-sama is scared of me, so I don't know if it is a good idea to show me this.” (Makoto) “It is certainly true that the words of our country's Priestess-sama are sacred. Her will translates to the will of the country, and there are many cases where it translates to the will of the people as well. However...I don't know what Chiya-sama has seen of Raidou-sama, and what she feared of it, but currently, she is in a special standing in our country. In a sense, that is.” (Sairitz) “What do you mean by ‘In a sense’?” (Makoto)

“I would have to explain various things if I were to delve deeper into it, which would be difficult to do with the limited time we have now. If I had to put it briefly...it means that the words of the priestess are not necessarily always absolute.” (Sairitz) “Not absolute huh.” (Makoto)

From what I interpreted, the words of the Lorel priestess were practically

absolute, but...is that not the case?

Also, Sairitz-san. I think she definitely did it on purpose but, when she said priestess, she didn't add the '-sama'.

There's probably some sort of meaning behind that.

It is a bit impossible for me to guess what that is though.

"Yeah. For the people of Lorel, animosity towards the Priestess-sama is treated as a definite evil, but Raidou-sama doesn't see Chiya-sama in that way." (Sairitz) "I have no intentions of bringing harm to the Priestess-sama." (Makoto) Just what kind of idiot would go through the trouble of being hostile to the person that a foreign country treats as valuable?

In Japan, there's a great teaching saying that when entering a country, you should treat their people well.

...I slightly forgot that in the Empire though.

"...Thank you very much. And so, regarding the place that Raidou-sama will be going, it is here." (Sairitz) Just like I thought, Sairitz-san pointed at the capital of Lorel, Naoi...and from there, she slowly moved her slender finger to the right.

Eh?

"This is the second city of our country, Kannaoi. There was a time when this place was our capital, and there's been history of this city fighting with the current capital Naoi." (Sairitz) Kannaoi...

Hm?

Naoi...

No wait, isn't that...

"Kannaoi, is it. The mercenary group is there?" (Makoto) "Raidou-sama, is the name strange?" (Sairitz)

...

I had my doubts, but I definitely didn't show it in my face, and yet, she saw through me.

“Ah, yeah. I was just thinking that Lorel really does have some peculiar names for their places.” (Makoto) I tell her the most plausible excuse I find.

“I see. Actually, Naoi as well. It isn’t recorded in the official history books, but there was a time when it was called Oonaoi, or something like that.” (Sairitz) Oonaoi and Kannaoui.

I also think...that’s the case.

If that’s really the case, the ‘real’ names would probably be Oonaobi and Kannaobi.

Then there should be another place with a name similar to the other one.

“Oh, I have derailed from the topic. Raidou-sama, after you have finished your preparations, can you please visit this other place that’s slightly north?” (Sairitz) Uwa, there it is.

A place that definitely doesn’t look safe.

“Yaso-Katsui Valley. I want to ask you to please head to the labyrinth dungeon that stretches underground this valley.” (Sairitz) Underground.

Labyrinth.

And Yaso-Katsui.

It is probably Yaso-Katsu*hi*.

It is probably based on the 80 calamities God, Yaso-Magatsuhi.

Ah~, I have a bad feeling about this.

Placing such a name to a valley.

And it is underground, moreover, a labyrinth.

In the first place, I don’t like confined places much.

I already had an experience not long ago which made me know that I hate participating in things like dungeons or labyrinths.

The 80 calamities God wasn’t necessarily an evil God, and there’s people

that worship him as a God that purifies misfortune, but...in this case, I think the name was placed because it brings forth misfortune.

Just what is it hiding there?

The Goddess?

Is it that damn Goddess?

“W-Why the labyrinth?” (Makoto)

“At the 20th floor of that labyrinth, also known as Rose Garden, they live there. I have already told them that we will be going there, so it is fine to go there to have a talk and negotiate.” (Sairitz) 20th floor underground?

What’s with that pleasant depth.

Don’t tell me that labyrinth is connected to hell.

Hm, labyrinth?

Not a cave?

“Ah—”

“It seems like there’s been a problem recently, but Yaso-Katsui labyrinth is currently calmed down. Raidou-sama shouldn’t have any problems at all in that labyrinth, right?” (Sairitz) “By the way, uhm...why is it not a cave but a labyrinth?” (Makoto) “Oh, sorry for that. I thought that Raidou-sama would already know. What a blunder of mine.” (Sairitz) Okay. Second bad feeling I am getting here.

Why did Sairitz-san assume that I knew?

“The big labyrinth that extends underground Yaso-Katsui is where the Superior Dragon ‘Night Clad’ lives. A place the Shadow Dragon that governs over darkness –Futz– has created. It isn’t a labyrinth that was created naturally, but a honest-to-word labyrinth.” (Sairitz) The labyrinth being big was bad news, but learning that the main cause of the place’s name was actually a Superior Dragon is good news.

What. It wasn’t that it was connected to hell or that it had something to do with the Goddess, but just about a Superior Dragon.

Then there's no need to worry.

I honestly think that it is a pain to go 20 floors down, but if it's that kind of dungeon, there should be things like shortcuts and those kind of stuff.

It is the country that's the most related to Japan after all!

"I see. So that's how it is. Understood. Sairitz-sama, thank you for the information. I will take it into consideration with a positive outlook. And so, I want to meet you before long." (Makoto) "I am happy to hear that answer. In around a few days I will be able to give you the promissory note. I will contact you once again via the guild." (Sairitz) A mercenary group that seems to be living at the 20th floor of a giant dungeon.

It is certainly good information.

I will talk with Rembrandt-san about this and gather information about them.

And if there's no problem, I will try meeting them.

If possible, I want them to become the shield that protects this town.

"Ah."

"What is it?" (Sairitz)

"Sorry, I just thought of something. Well then, I will be taking my leave, Sairitz-sama." (Makoto) I bow and leave the room.

And then, I turn my thoughts towards the reason why I let out my voice.

Which follower should I bring with me?

It is not a task that has to be done by today, but I feel like there will be an intense battle royal occurring in Asora once again.

Since it is Lorel, Tomoe is going to be persistent.

A Superior Dragon might be appearing in this matter, so I feel like Tomoe is the better choice, but I don't think we will be able to have leisure time there.

With the matter of the birth of hot springs, Tomoe's interest in Lorel has

dimmed slightly compared to the past.

Now then...I pray that this matter somehow resolves in a calm and peaceful manner.

It will probably be a wish that won't become true.

For now, I decide to just go to Rembrandt-san's place to give him the report.

Chapter 235: Dinner and reports

Makoto here.

After explaining the situation, it resulted in two women scattering sparks in Asora.

Shiki and the new addition Tamaki had already stepped back and declared their standing, so that part is fine, but...

No, because of that, it turned into a one-on-one fight.

Both of them should have their own jobs to do, and yet, I can tell that their priority right now has become Lorel.

To the point that I could read it in their eyes.

I thought that today would be okay though.

Before all this happened...

We didn't have any plans with anyone at dinner, so we ate dinner with everyone at Asora, and well, we were able to have a peaceful dinner with Tomoe and Mio in our last meal of the day.

Ah, today was tofu.

It was delicious.

Cold tofu is a template in those kind of meals, but there was also agedashi tofu and tempura.

That white thing does well even in boiled food.

“Okay, then that's fine!” (Tomoe)

“Yeah, I don't have any complains!!” (Mio)

But after the dinner...

I deny the voices from entering into my ears, and while holding my tea in one hand, I endeavour to look at a part of the landscape while some sort of fierce battle began.

Eh?

Since things had begun breaking, I thought they would already change the stage to the outside but...

“Ah~, and so?” (Makoto)

I ask the two that are approaching to where I am in an excited state.

Shiki, Tamaki, and Ema and the others have already been sent to another room to take refuge. There’s only us three in this hall.

“It has been decided that fighting is unnecessary.” (Tomoe)

“Heh~.”

That was Tomoe.

“Since the beginning, this wasn’t something to fight for.” (Mio)

“Please notice that before we had to evacuate everyone.” (Makoto)

Mio also said this as she cooled down.

“We noticed that there’s absolutely no problems if we both go.” (Tomoe)

“Bringing us both would be the best option-desu wa!” (Mio)

Ooh.

Because of the matter with Koran, Tomoe is in a situation where she will be on a leave from town for a while, and the part of the store Mio is involved with is prospering.

That store has a lot of things that were made with the concept of Japanese-style food, so it is still at a phase where I still want Mio to look after the store.

Because Mio and I are the ones that know the most about the seasoning and way of making it after all.

The people that are working at that store are still in the stage where they are still following after Mio.

I also thought about just going by myself, but this is about me, going alone to a country gave the feeling that something would definitely happen, so I dismissed that idea.

In the end, it is settled that I will be going to Lorel, but after dinner, I began the talk that I wanted one person to accompany me.

...Ah, now that I think about it, it would have been better to evacuate Ema and the others and leave only the followers beforehand.

Or just nominate Shiki?

Not that long ago, I was told that I favour Shiki too much though...

“...You two, if both of you were to leave, the company and the town will receive quite the burden, you know?” (Makoto)

“Shiki will work hard.” (Tomoe)

You say that pretty easily, Tomoe.

I am sure he will take on the job, but Shiki also has a limit in his 24 hours.

“Yes. If there’s the need to, we can just use Tamaki and Sari, that way, there won’t be any problems for a while, Waka-sama.” (Mio)

“Tamaki is a no. I have something planned for her, and at present, I will only make her do jobs related to Asora. She still has to manage that big shrine, so I don’t want to be lax about it.” (Makoto)

Mio also easily brought out the two people that I have a policy of not letting out of Asora.

“Regarding me, I will be reporting at a later time, but honestly, I have already understood the actual state of affairs of Koran by today, so I think there’s no need to waste time there. If this were a leave of several months, it is certainly true that it would cause several inconveniences, but isn’t this a business trip? With the Winged-kin radar that serves to search for enemies from high altitudes, and the network of Forest Onis that can seek for the cooperation of villages in the areas, there should be no problems.” (Tomoe)

“That’s right. Tsige is not in such a strained state where Tomoe-san and I have to participate regularly in it-desu wa. If something happens, we can return immediately. A dungeon may be unappealing, but looking at the

ingredients and cooking of a foreign country will become an irreplaceable experience. Especially Lorel where the vestiges of Waka-sama's fellow countrymen remain. Just what kind of form has the Japanese food taken in the region and how much it has been raised. I am really interested!" (Mio)

...

At this rate, before we move to the report meeting, we will end up in an unnecessary fight just like the two said, and then there's the possibility of everyone getting tired by it.

The persuasion of the two wasn't a simple 'I don't care about the town', but something more concrete by understanding the situation of it.

Even if an unexpected situation occurs in the dungeon, I can't imagine a situation where we three are unable to make a recovery in a few days.

The only thing there is a simple Superior Dragon after all.

"Mio, is the store okay? Isn't it difficult to operate the store with only the girls there?" (Makoto)

"I was planning on doing something next week. For that reason, I trained them quite a bit, so they are currently slightly better than what Waka-sama thinks they are-desu wa~." (Mio)

That's the first I have heard of it.

However, that Mio said she trained them 'quite' a bit and they got 'slightly' better.

She is super spartan.

I hope the amount of cooks in Asora won't decrease.

I should ask the people that are at the store about the actual circumstances.

Because I don't think I will be able to hear anything accurate from the manager in front of me.

There has been a previous experience where Mio said that she had a 'bit' of an idea and proceeded to seclude herself in the kitchen for two weeks

making dashi.

“Plan, you say?” (Makoto)

“This is only limited to the early morning and at noon, but I was thinking about making a menu for take out.” (Mio)

“Take out meals... Sounds like a bento.” (Makoto)

“Yes, it is exactly that. The name is Bento fair.” (Mio)

“I think it is an interesting idea but, why?” (Makoto)

“The congestion at noon is specially terrible, so I thought of it as one of the methods to soften it. We have also gotten the permission from the town to place tables and seats at the front of the store when it is lunch, but as expected, it would be easier to just increase the people that buy and eat somewhere else. That way, I think the situation would get slightly better.” (Mio)

“There’s a limit to how many tables we can place inside the store after all. Also, take out huh. I see.” (Makoto)

“I was thinking about reporting this later, but I have done it now. I will bring the detailed documents later. It seems like we will be able to sample the menu in our journey-desu wa ne. Ufufufu.” (Mio)

It is certainly true that there’s few take out meals that have rice and side dishes present in Tsige.

If we are talking about taking out, it would be mostly fast food after all.

There will be people who will be able to learn about the taste of our store, and I can expect quite a variety of synergizing effects from this proposal.

But...

Thinking about how that publicity-like method might have a good effect, I don’t think the use of bentos will decrease the amount of congestion.

The customers who are aiming to buy bentos will increase, and the customers who think that it was delicious will come to the store again to

have meals there.

In terms of result, it will be good for the sales, but regarding the congestions, I think it will turn into a vicious cycle.

No well, I will just keep silent about it.

If there's the need to, I can ask the neighboring store via the Guild to please move from there –with good conditions, of course– and expand the food store of Mio.

At present, there's no problem if we simply increase the space of the store at lunch time...probably.

Eating the sample food of the bento made by Mio and her disciples at Lorel huh.

Aside from going to the dungeon, it might actually be unexpectedly fun.

“There's no need for you to go regularly to Koran, right Tomoe?”
(Makoto)

“Of course. I think I will be able to give a good report regarding that town.” (Tomoe)

“I see...” (Makoto)

Currently, Shiki is quite busy with the Academy town and Tsige.

Tamaki has the management of the shrines, and she is getting acquainted with the inside work of Asora alongside the residents. I don't really want to let her out.

Regarding Sari...well, depending on the situation, I think it is fine to loosen a bit, but for now, she has the work in Asora filling her hands.

Then that's fine huh.

Tomoe and Mio had finished giving their opinions, and were watching my state.

“Understood. Let's go to Lorel, both of you. Forest Onis and one Eldwarf...if there's anyone that you two want to bring as well, can you please choose them?” (Makoto)

“Yes! We are finally able to go to Lorel, right?!” (Tomoe)

“Understood. There’s one Arke that’s soon able to move outside. Also, about the bento...” (Mio)

“Ah~ wait wait. We will be having a report meeting, so let’s group up with Shiki and Tamaki, also Tomoe will give me the details about Koran, and...Mio, tell me the line-up of the bentos and the information of the employees you will be using while we are away. I have lessons tomorrow, so I have to hear all of it today.” (Makoto)

“Right. Understood. Then let’s do the meeting in the room where Shiki and Tamaki are then.” (Tomoe)

“Yes, Waka-sama.” (Mio)

Accompanied by the two who are in a good mood, we move to the room where I had Shiki and Tamaki go to.

I thought they would be doing some complicated talk there, but they were just silently turning documents and checking them.

The two of them have quite a big amount of subordinates, so the number of reports is large as well.

When the talk of Lorel comes out, the burden they will take will most likely increase in a lot of meanings.

I am truly sorry.

“Shiki, Tamaki, sorry for the wait.” (Makoto)

“Don’t worry. It was a lot faster than I thought it would take.” (Shiki)

“Yeah. The both of them didn’t seem like they would be taking it outside. Who gave up first?” (Tamaki)

“Both-ja, Tamaki.” (Tomoe)

“Too bad your expectations didn’t hit the mark huh.” (Mio)

“Ara.” (Tamaki)

“This time, I have decided to bring both of them to Lorel. The work in Asora will be handled by Tamaki, and the work of Shiki in Tsige will

increase, but...please adjust to it. I will hear about any suggestions and requests to the best of my abilities.” (Makoto)

“The two, is it. Understood. Waka-sama, what do you intend to do about the lessons in Rotsgard?” (Shiki)

It seems like Shiki already expected this. He easily responded.

“The lessons will continue as scheduled. Even if we are going to be travelling far, we can teleport, so both can stand together. Tsige is currently in a lull state, so if we are able to find the people that can become the core of its defense, it would be advantageous.” (Makoto)

In terms of constancy, employing mercenaries can become a big burden to us, the town, and the mercenary group depending on the circumstances.

If possible, it would be great if they were to teach the ins and outs of defense to Tsige, and after surpassing the big mountain called independence, it would be possible to terminate the contract.

“That’s true. Being busy is the usual for us anyways, so it is to the point that lately there hasn’t been enough work. Hahaha.” (Shiki)

Shiki laughed and agreed.

“Having Kuzunoha company continuously helping out Tsige as a whole will only be disadvantageous if we think about the future. I think it is a good idea. Sari is dependable, and I don’t mind at all that the work in Asora will increase, Makoto-sama.” (Tamaki)

“Thanks. That helps me out a lot.” (Makoto)

“Well then, it has been decided that Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono will be accompanying Waka-sama to Lorel. Waka-sama, there’s no problem if we begin the report meeting now, right?” (Shiki)

“Yeah. Tomoe will tell me about Koran; Mio will tell me about Tsige’s state and your plan with the food store; Shiki about the Academy town and the surroundings of the Merchant Guild; Tamaki about Asora in its entirety.”

“Okay.”

My four followers speak out their acknowledgment.

The meeting of Kuzunoha company, we were somehow able to safely begin it.

Chapter 236: Results of Kuzunoha company

Ah, right.

Koran is a port town, so it is obviously close to the sea.

No well, it is an obvious thing, but it is now that I know the meaning of it.

“And so, Koran –with the consensus of the town– wanted to have a permanent collaboration with Tsige –no, with the Kuzunoha company. Speaking more accurately, it would be with our shipbuilding group and the Neptunes.” (Tomoe)

After safely resolving the matter of who will be going to Lorel with me, the meeting with the followers gathered at Asora had begun.

First, it was the report of Tomoe regarding the cooperative attitude of Koran towards Tsige, to the point of being eerie. The reason why has been revealed.

“It is true that the scale of the shipbuilding work of that town has been steadily increasing. It is not at the level of Tsige, but every time I go there, the scenery always changes. They have already absorbed a number of neighboring fishing villages and have gained plenty enough strength on their own, so they will probably grow even more.” (Shiki)

“They properly understand that it was all thanks to us. They are a smart bunch-desu wa ne. They are a more understandable bunch compared to the major powers.” (Mio)

Shiki and Mio are the ones who have been coming and going to Koran the most within the people here, so they are knowledgeable about the personality of that town.

The two of them seem to be convinced about the report of Tomoe.

“With the technique of the Eldwas, the shipbuilding techniques also get better, and it provides an overwhelming advantage against the other

neighbouring towns. As of now, there's no port town that can compete with them and the favorable wind continues. Also...the cooperation of the Neptunes must be playing a big part as well. It seems like they haven't shown themselves, but the fishing boats that are from Koran are clearly getting more catch and have a safer travel compared to others." (Tamaki)

It seems like Tamaki has grasped the current state of Koran, which she has never gone to before, by reading the documents and hearing the report of Tomoe.

Just as she has pointed out, Koran and the towns that are related to it have not faced any accidents in their sea route since a certain time.

That time was when Shiki had spoken about Koran to Serwhale-san.

The Neptunes had a faction conflict at the sea in the past, so they have only been to the neighboring areas of Koran where they know it is safe, but it seems like the other sea races are quite far into the sea. That's why, along with the information gathering of the Neptunes, they also help out with the sailing of the ships in Koran.

It seems like the Neptunes don't want to meet with the Neptune force related to the brother of Serwhale-san after all.

Well, they abandoned that side and decided to follow his little brother Serwhale-san, so that's natural though.

"I certainly do remember agreeing with the sea residents about their request to protect the fellows of Asora that are in Koran, but...I didn't know that they were doing this much. Doesn't seem like Mio and Shiki knew either." (Tomoe)

"Right. So that's the reason why there were no attacks." (Shiki)

"Well, there's no real problem with that-desu wa. Isn't that rather something praiseworthy?" (Mio)

Yeah, I also heard about that.

There are around 10 people from Asora in Koran.

And so, since it is a beach and the attacks of marine demonic beasts on

land are not that big of a deal, they said they would be looking after the sea to a certain extent. This is something that the people from the sea told me not that long ago.

I think it was at the time when the talk about increasing the number of Eldwas for shipbuilding had come out.

It seems like the fruits of their efforts had changed Koran's view of Tsige in a terrifying manner.

The ships that Koran is using are mostly made by our craftsmen, or ships that they have had a hand in the work.

And it seems like with the craftsmanship of the Eldwas, they have made the ships so that they can be recognized even when looking at them from under the sea.

So when they are spotted, they help the ship out in their cruising, defeat the marine beasts that might be a threat, and at land, our employees would be provided information about fishing grounds, the environment of the sea, and things like that.

Well, it is natural that the races that live in the sea have more information than the humans that use ships to travel through the sea. And it seems like the fishermen and sailors are already seeing us as a priceless treasure.

When Tomoe introduced herself as being on the same standing as Mio and Shiki, they gave her a warm welcome as if she were the representative of Tsige.

"The fishing amount, as well as the information they possess, overwhelms that of the other towns. And because of that, they have begun taking interest in the ocean and their expertise. For that sake, they want to get along with us even more. And coupled with the information that Kuzunoha company is based in Tsige...it seems like it turned into them thinking that they might as well just get under our wings. The matter with Koran is already settled." (Tomoe)

Hmph.

So Levi, the mermaids, and the sirens have been doing a lot as well huh.

They have sunk every ship that has been approaching Koran to seize it in this time of revolution, since they are practically pirates.

Well, it is certainly true that ships look like leaves when seeing them from within the sea, and lately, that girl Levi has been saying strange things like: 'I have been getting good at sniping~'.

Just by opening a big hole in the ship, you can create a disaster after all.

The sirens and mermaids as well.

They find land and islands, and hunt hostile ships mercilessly.

Even without Levi, they can show them a painful time with their magic.

Once at the sea, humans become weak.

I pity them.

"In that case, leaving aside unification, the reason why Koran wants to enter Tsige's wing is because they already know that by doing that they will be able to enjoy the merits that they can obtain, right?" (Makoto)

"Right. They didn't look like they would suffer any disadvantages from it." (Tomoe)

"They possess a good quality sea, and in terms of shipbuilding, they possess techniques that are valuable for the Eldwas. I think that Kuzunoha company will continue their relationship as it has been until now." (Shiki)

"Yeah. The carapaced types and shellfishes are currently the easiest to prepare and their taste is also good, so they are pretty useful-desu wa. The part that they are lowering their head to Waka-sama is also cute, isn't it?" (Mio)

"I know about the sea of Asora, but I think it would serve as good reference to have the data of other seas. If this doesn't bring any danger to Asora's residents, I think it is okay to maintain the status quo, and it would also be okay to advance that relationship." (Tamaki)

So everyone is in favor huh.

I also don't have much reason to go against it.

Or more like, from what I have heard in the reports, I feel like it would be good to go there once.

To show my face there.

"Since they are relying on us that much, maybe I should show my face there at least once?" (Makoto)

"They are also expectantly waiting for that moment. In terms of popularity and amount of transactions, the Rembrandt company and the Kuzunoha company are basically viewed as the representatives of Tsige. They courteously received the envoys." (Tomoe)

"...Ah." (Makoto)

"Waka, is there something bothering you?" (Tomoe)

"There's a merchant that went to Koran, Schirra-san, right? The company representative of the company that deals with things like gems and crystals." (Makoto)

"...Yeah, there's that one." (Tomoe)

"How did it go with him? It seemed like he had some sort of incident in the past with Koran though." (Makoto)

I try asking about the man that I suddenly remember.

"It seems like they did quite an unethical thing, but it wasn't he himself who did it but their family predecessor anyways. It is still only one day since we arrived at Koran, but it seems like the ban they had has been lifted." (Tomoe)

"I see. And so, do you think they are scheming something in the future?" (Makoto)

"Doesn't seem like it. He was simply happy that he would be able to do transactions on the same standing as the other companies. From what I see, he is a man that has reasonable skill." (Tomoe)

"He did look like a capable person. And so, what did they even do at

Koran?” (Makoto)

“...The crystal corals that can only be found at the sea and are treated as a gift of the sea. It seems like they weren't satisfied with the amount, so they were demanding to let them go to the depths of the sea to take more. To the place where the fishermen of Koran treat as a sacred place.”
(Tomoe)

Uwa, that's low.

“Ah, those crystal corals huh. It is true that they are beautiful, and it was also prohibited to take them. It is not like they only grow in that place, but if we are talking about the place that is the closest and can be entered the easiest it would be that place huh.” (Mio)

“A foolish move that creates animosity towards the locals. Seriously, the very definition of a fool.” (Shiki)

Mio seems to know about that place.

Shiki seems like he also knows about it, but it looks like he also knows how important that place is to the locals.

So they tried to put their hands on a place they shouldn't have even tried to huh.

Or more like, they have done something like that and yet, just because he was one of the envoys of Tsige, he was forgiven. I have to be careful on that.

Be careful on what I say that can be taken as some sort of approval.

So that it doesn't happen, I should meet with the influential people of Koran and create a connection promptly.

I don't want the name of our place falling because of something weird those guys might do.

It was a reputation that the Eldwas, Mio, Shiki, and sea races had build up after all.

“There's no need to tell this to Waka-sama, but...for the people that live on the blessings of the sea, the places that are established as prohibited

for fishing have an important meaning behind it. And if on top of that it is being treated as a sacred precinct, it can be considered miraculous that they didn't get executed for the simple fact that they are outsiders that tried to enter. For the people, the sea is a place that they can't control, so things like superstitions and jinx are plenty enough to bet their life on."
(Tamaki)

"...Well, that's right." (Makoto)

"And yet, there's already enough trust build up that just by being in the same group as us, they can forgive this sin. Kuzunoha company is truly trusted. I am moved." (Tamaki)

"Thanks." (Makoto)

The words of Tamaki still can't enter in me as honest.

But it is not like what she is saying is strange or anything.

It is a matter of course to endeavor in not betraying expectations after all.

"I think there's worth in trying to visit with just Rembrandt company and our Kuzunoha company. And so, in outline, I will be acting for a few days together with the envoy group that are over at Koran, but there's probably not going to be anything worth reporting. Doesn't seem like there will be any problems in having Koran under Tsige." (Tomoe)

"Understood. Thanks, Tomoe." (Makoto)

"Well, in my opinion, I just want to go to Lorel quickly. Mufufufufu."
(Tomoe)

"I will make it so we can go as fast as possible. Now then, the next one is Mio. You will be telling me the detailed menu that you will be making...ah, this one, right? Next, is the state of the town. Is there anything that has changed or something of interest?" (Makoto)

"Uhm, I have already talked about the bento, so...regarding the state of the town, it isn't hasty like the time with Rotsgard, and in the sense of tension, this town is able to maintain it at an ordinary level. There's

nothing of interest. If I had to say something...the birthday of Rinon is coming soon. Toa said that she wanted to have the party at our place.”
(Mio)

...That’s really just saying whatever comes to mind.

I see. Rinon’s birthday is coming. How old was she?

She isn’t in school, so there’s nothing about student year and that makes it harder to know.

There’s already the income of her sister’s party, and they are also okay with their house expenditures, and Rinon herself is gaining income too.

Just what’s the point of age?

“I see. Ah well, she is an adventurer we are well acquainted with so, isn’t it fine to let her do it?” (Makoto)

“I was intending to do that. Komoe was also excited about it, so I will have her help out in something. Is that okay, Tomoe-san?” (Mio)

“Of course-ja. Go ahead and use her.” (Tomoe)

Shiki and Tamaki were also in favour of the party, and they were lining up suggestions and ideas.

What a peaceful scene.

For some reason, Shiki and Tamaki have a lot of ideas for magic performances.

Why do these magicians know so many recipes for magic tricks when they can do actual magic?

Ah right, Tamaki is a shrine maiden, not a magician.

She is wearing a red and white shrine maiden outfit at this moment and all.

She actually has a black outfit as well. I saw her once wearing a black shrine maiden outfit, but that felt so ominous and uncomfortable. And so, I asked her to please not venture too much with the outfit of a shrine maiden.

And well, while I was thinking about something out of topic, Tamaki had suggested a number of ideas for the bento menu to Mio. Things like sweet-and-sour pork, mapo doufu, and ebi chili were added to the menu.

The topic about onigiri for the adventurers was brought out, and the two of them got strangely heated in the discussion.

I personally like onigiri as well.

The one I like the most is lemon chicken, but I feel like it might turn into another unproductive discussion, so I refrain from saying it out loud.

There was no need to worry about such things. The two of them were discussing about the distribution of salt and the blending of it. They are talking about things like the kind of rice uniformity and are already entering a domain I can't join.

“Ara, that's why I don't like ignorance. Listen well, adventurers are people that obtain their provisions from the actual place as they think of their food supply situation. There's no need to have their food last for a month! In the first place, with this distribution of salt, the taste will drop radically! The viscosity of the rice will decrease, and the salt will overwhelm the sweetness of it!!” (Mio)

“The taste is a trivial problem compared to starvation! Having food that can serve for emergencies serves for peace of mind, so even if it is slightly salty, they wouldn't mind!” (Tamaki)

“There's no idiot who would stuff their bags with onigiris just for that as they go to the wasteland! People like that would be laughable!” (Mio)

“That's why you increase the amount it can fill up your hunger by increasing the size and adding...” (Tamaki)

“I am thinking about providing onigiris as bentos. I don't want to feed something strange that's comparable to a ninja pill.” (Mio)

What Mio proposed first was an onigiri that was salted so it could last for 1 week.

I don't think that's so different from ninja pills though.

In the first place, if the importance is directed at its preservation, wouldn't it be better to put dried plum in instead of not putting anything?

Let's try saying it...no, entering this dispute is most likely a bad move.

No matter where it rolls, it won't turn into a good result.

I can't imagine onigiri that can last for one month to begin with.

That's really made out of white rice, right?

I can only see it as some sort of onigiri mutation though.

Well, this is a place to talk about reports, so I will have them tell me their arguments at a later time.

"Mio and Tamaki, STOP! Can you please have that debate at another time with the two of you and the related people? I want to hear the report of Shiki after all." (Makoto)

"...That's true. It is not something that can be decided after talking here for a little." (Mio)

"We have not touched the possibilities of the ingredients after all. It would take more than one night. I am truly sorry." (Tamaki)

As expected, they were intending to leave the boundaries of onigiri huh.

How scary.

Not only a night, it is practically being treated as a research topic.

I am glad that they at least agreed in stopping.

"On my side, it would be about the report of Rotsgard. The merchant guild that has been reorganized by Zara as the center has already settled down. From the top brass and the representatives that compose the organization, there's no one who wants to be hostile against us. Waka-sama's attendance to the meetings has increased compared to the past, and they already know that with Akua, Eris, Lime, or I, the meeting can proceed in a satisfactory manner anyways, so it is incredibly easy to handle." (Shiki)

"It is true that I have tried to participate more than before. Simply

showing your face and drinking tea can create some credence.” (Makoto)

“Yes. Also, before the attack in Rotsgard, Kuzunoha company had shown radical growth and didn’t expose itself much, so the representative was riddled with mystery. Since everyone related to the guild participated in the meetings except for Waka-sama, it created an unnecessary sense of distrust. After becoming the saviour of the town, moreover, provided assistance to the reconstruction of it, the unnecessary filters placed on us have disappeared. I think that played a big part in how easy it is to move now.” (Shiki)

“So the relationship we have with the guild is going well. And so, how’s the town been lately?” (Makoto)

Gotta know about the latest info of the reconstruction.

“This might be considered a great achievement brought by injury. A part of the town that had been destroyed by the variants has been put in order. With this, more effective renovations can be done, more people will gather, and the liveliness will grow. There’s been cases where people that left are now returning, and the population is recovering favorably. Also, regarding the slums where the demi-humans lived in, there has been no requests for demolition, and it is still being used as their dwelling with slight repairs.” (Shiki)

Fumufumu.

Not a bad report.

The places that have been destroyed are being renovated, but that doesn’t mean there’s no people living there anymore. Rather, there’s more people now.

And yet, the demi-humans that would normally be driven out first, have been admitted to live just as they have been.

That must mean the standing of the demi-humans has increased a bit.

“How is Bor and the others doing?” (Makoto)

“They are cooperating with the reconstruction. There’s still a lot of

simple manual labor left. Also, a part of the town's companies have begun copying our part-time job policy. For the demi-humans, this is a chance to show their strength, so they are doing their best in order to obtain employment.” (Shiki)

“What about the area where there's that variant turned into a giant tree?” (Makoto)

“It has completely become a public park that represents the town. Rotsgard is still not in a finished state yet, but they are already at the phase where they are polishing the finer details. Representative Zara seems to be thinking in the same way. He promptly settled a plan to provide assistance to the surrounding towns and he wanted to request for our cooperation.” (Shiki)

“The satellite towns huh. After Rotsgard, they have to do something about them as well, right.” (Makoto)

“That's a matter that representative Zara, the merchant guild, and the Academy have to tackle themselves. Zara will request for our cooperation, but I think there's no need for overcommitment there. Kuzunoha company has already cooperated plenty enough with the reconstruction of Rotsgard. The store is thriving everyday, Waka-sama.” (Shiki)

“I see. That's great.” (Makoto)

“Yes, thanks for your hard work. With this, we have created an environment where we can concentrate only on the lessons at Rotsgard.” (Shiki)

I didn't continue by saying: ‘it is fine to take a good rest then’.

Rather, Shiki's motivation is literally read as serious. I feel like fire is swaying at his back.

“Tomorrow's lesson huh. If I remember correctly, we are integrating the new students, right?” (Makoto)

“That's right! It will be the step-up for Jin, Amelia, and the others, and it will also be an important moment to make new students for Waka-sama!” (Shiki)

“Y-Yeah, I understand.” (Makoto)

I am not that passionate like Shiki though.

From the documents that he brought out, excluding Jin and the others, there's around 30 students.

That's pretty high.

That Shiki, he isn't being too passionate and trying to create a Raidou faction within the academy, right?

I don't want that.

I definitely don't want to get involved in the power strife inside the academy.

“There's a lot of new students, but well, this is just to please the people at the office. After doing some classes, there will most likely be only a few remaining.” (Shiki)

“That's how it will end up.” (Makoto)

“Tomorrow will be their first lesson, so I would like to have Waka-sama move as well. Is that okay?” (Shiki)

“I don't mind.” (Makoto)

I am the teacher anyways.

There's not many classes where you just talk and that's all.

“Thanks. Well, we will have the students understand first that the class of Raidou is not one where we treat the students gently like customers. It may be troublesome but, please do take care of it.” (Shiki)

...

Ah, there's a few students in the list who are from pretty famous noble families.

I thought after seeing the tournament, they wouldn't want to join our class so there was no need to worry, but it seems like I was still underestimating humans.

Jin and the others have vomited their share of blood and pushed their limits in order to stand where they are now.

As long as there's no people here that have some sort of outstanding talent, there's no person that can get better by simply being praised.

Rather, it would create misunderstandings and make them full of themselves, and that can cause them to commit a fatal mistake.

Just as Shiki said, we have to make them understand that first.

Even I don't know how to easily make people stronger.

The reason behind that evil smile of Shiki is probably because of the part about pleasing the people at the office.

I can understand that too.

Having them telling us to increase the number of students all the time does get in your nerves.

"Understood. Then after the matter with the lessons calms down and Tomoe returns from Koran, Sairitz-san will most likely have the promissory note ready, so we will be going to Lorel then. Wrapping the matters outside with this...Tamaki, I think you have already gotten used to Asora, right?" (Makoto)

"Yes. I am deeply moved at how splendid of a place it is." (Tamaki)

"How is it going with the shrine administration and the familiarity with the races that have been living with you, Tamaki? Is there anything that's been troubling you?" (Makoto)

"There's nothing troubling me, but there's a number of things I would like to report to Makoto-sama, and ask you about." (Tamaki)

"Yeah, I am listening." (Makoto)

The Asora reflected in the eyes of Tamaki.

The newest addition in my followers, and also the one I can't get my grasp on the most.

Now then, just what does she feel?

I hope I can understand her better with this...

Chapter 237: A place that's nowhere

It has been a while since the shrines (and Tamaki) have appeared in Asora.

I have done shrine visits once a day.

The change in atmosphere after passing through the shrine archway, the refreshing grounds; that silence that is detached from the sounds of life...is something special even in this world and Asora.

Also, the scent of the trees and the incense make me remember Japan and it makes me nostalgic, which is one of the reasons of my daily visits as well.

But it is not like I stay that long there, so I don't know about the state of it at the other hours.

For the people that live in Asora, just how has the existence of a shrine taken form in them? I have been slightly interested in it.

That's why I have been looking forward to seeing if Tamaki's report has something regarding that.

"First of all, about the administration of the shrine: thanks to the direct request of Makoto-sama, all of the races have been helping out frequently. Most people would show there at least once, and now, even children come to play." (Tamaki) "Heh~." (Makoto)

"The cherry blossom viewing event probably worked as a saving for the image of the shrine in Asora. That's most likely the reason why they can go there with ease." (Tamaki) "As expected, it didn't become a place where people gather because of faith huh. Sorry, Tamaki." (Makoto) It is a place where it has a Shinto shrine, a Buddhist temple, and a Parthenon temple, moreover, there's a shrine maiden as well. And yet, it is being treated as a big public park, which makes me feel bad.

Tsukuyomi-sama, Daikokuten-sama, Susanoo-sama, Athena-sama; these place was created because of our connection with them after all.

But it is not like they are the Gods of Asora, and aside from me, there's

no one that has any familiarity with those names.

Well, it can't be helped that it isn't treated as a place to give prayers religiously.

If that's the case, the divine vessel might starve for worship, so well, at that point, it should endure with my visits.

Does it even have a will? I don't know if it gets hungry either though.

The divine vessel literally looks like a simple ball after all.

"Please don't mind that. This is a place where races that didn't even pray to the Goddess are gathered. Just because a place connected to Gods –they don't even know about– appears, it would be strange if they immediately take it as a religious place." (Tamaki) "If it's been taken as a resting place at the very least, does that mean it is doing well?" (Makoto) "Yes. Also... Makoto-sama visits it everyday. Thanks to that, there have been a number of people that come to offer their prayers. The residents here are mostly people that naturally accept things and share their thoughts. Their compatibility with shrines is definitely not bad." (Tamaki) "I see. It is good that there have been people going to give their prayers." (Makoto) "Yeah. Temples and shrines don't discriminate races, and the temple one has been expanded, so it is mostly being visited by the sea people. But..." (Tamaki) "...Is there a problem?" (Makoto)

Honestly, I don't want to hear about any problems regarding the shrine.

It would be one thing if they were not interested or they are treating it as air, but I wouldn't be happy to hear that they are against it. This is just my personal opinion though.

"There's no problem but...the target of their prayers is...uhm..." (Tamaki) "Yeah, 'the target is'...?" (Makoto)

"Makoto-sama." (Tamaki)

"...Hah?" (Makoto)

Why did it turn out that way?

The ones that are enshrined there are different Gods (well, to be precise,

Tamaki says that there's only a mysterious divine vessel and there's nothing like the divine protection of the Gods or their will in them though), and in the first place, I am not a God.

And I am no overlord either.

This is so unexpected that it just doesn't make sense.

"...Kukukuku." (Tomoe)

"Ara, that's wonderful." (Mio)

"I see. That's how it turned out." (Shiki)

Tomoe, Mio, and Shiki, muttered this with joy.

But it doesn't seem like they find it strange.

Why?

In the first place, even if I am not always in Asora, I do come here often and they can totally talk to me and touch me as well. I'm totally a feudal lord.

"It probably means that for Asora, Makoto-sama is a living God, or something proportionate to that. It has been a while since this Tamaki here has seen a person that is a ruler, and yet, treated as a God. Moreover, the ruler himself doesn't see himself in that way, but the people still treat him as a God." (Tamaki) "..."

"I have explained the manners and attitude they should take, but...in terms of the divine vessel I spoke about, just by giving their prayers is enough. Currently, it is a trifle matter, but if I had to say one concern of mine, this would be it." (Tamaki) "This is not trifle, it is incredibly concerning!" (Makoto) "Ara~" (Tamaki)

"Can you please explain it well to them? Like seriously, please." (Makoto) "If it's the order of Makoto-sama, I of course will handle it carefully." (Tamaki) "I am sure you will be able to explain it properly, so I am counting on you." (Makoto) This is no joke.

I am not such a splendid person to be prayed by at shrines.

Those kind of things are probably more fit for people that leave their mark in history.

...Ah, but well, in modern times, there have been people who have done great achievements like flood control which have been revered.

If I remember correctly, they were treated as living deities.

Both cases are way too disconnected from me.

It feels as if something incredibly heavy has fallen on my shoulders.

Sorry, please spare me.

“To persuade them will certainly be relatively hard though.” (Tamaki)
“Of course, I don’t think it will be solved only with words. Don’t worry.” (Makoto)
“That’s a relief. And so, regarding matters aside from the shrine.” (Tamaki)
“Yeah, how is it?” (Makoto)

“Sari and Ema are capable people, so the land and sea are working together perfectly. Even though the numbers have increased quite a lot, the dissatisfaction of the residents in Asora is scarily low to the point of being surprising.” (Tamaki)
“That’s true. Those two are a great help.” (Makoto)

“The people that have been involved with this place from the beginning: Tomoe-san, Mio-san, and Shiki-san, are truly managing it skillfully. I am purely impressed.” (Tamaki)
“Hm? Skillfully?” (Makoto)

“ ... ”

I was slightly bothered by how Tamaki said it.

I glanced at the three, but they don’t seem to be saying anything about it.

“They understand well that all the races believe in power supremacy, and as an outlet, they provide the Asora ranking as a place to fight and have amusement. And with that, it dispels the discontent at early stages and also creates a natural hierarchy with Makoto-sama as the summit. There’s also a lot of government techniques done here as well. It is splendid.” (Tamaki)
Skillful...government.

Why is it that my emotions are stirring slightly?

“That’s just by chance. It was surprising for me that it turned into a good place for amusement.” (Tomoe) “It is a good place to kill time, right?” (Mio)

“This domain called Asora has Waka-sama at its centre, so there’s not really any problem in him standing at its summit.” (Shiki) And for some reason, those three seem to be dodging those words...

Leaving aside Mio.

“That’s why there’s not much I can propose to do. Currently, there would be only one thing.” (Tamaki) Tamaki didn’t delve deeper into it either, and continues with a different topic.

“Regarding the treatment of the animals, I think they should be dealt with urgently.” (Tamaki) “Animals? Are you talking about the chickens and cows?” (Makoto) There’s certainly animals that have been raised as livestock in Asora.

There was a period of time when we had trouble with it, but most of it should have been resolved already.

I didn’t only hear the reports, I have also gone there myself a few times, and that’s how I felt.

“No, I am talking about the animals in the wild. The ones like: wolves, bears, and the Roc bird.” (Tamaki) “What do you mean by dealing with them? There hasn’t been any friction.” (Makoto) “Makoto-sama, Asora will surely develop even more in the future. Because here, there’s only powers that are affiliated with Makoto-sama. With how things go, the places where one can live will run out before long. No matter how big the place is, this will definitely happen one day. That’s why we shouldn’t let those animals do whatever they want with such a vast place. Instead, we should eradicate them in the early stages, or take them under your direct control as part of the residents. That way, I think the problems in the future will be lessened.” (Tamaki) “...”

“If it is left as it is, when the time comes, they will bring out the name of Makoto-sama and will use a vague promise as their backing, which will create disputes in the future with the residents. Makoto-sama is the

personage that serves as the heart of this nation. At the very least, I think that the present vague promises like giving them a forest and desert should be rechecked into something more proper.” (Tamaki) “I don’t think they would create problems like that though.” (Makoto) “Makoto-sama, pardon me, but problems concerned with the environment and living beings in it, are definitely not matters that turn into good things by their own. In the case of problems with original residents and new ones, it is easiest to just quickly eradicate them and then look back at history and apologize for it. Makoto-sama doesn’t like complicated problems, and it is also one of the most simplest and clear methods of resolving the matter.” (Tamaki) Ugh.

But I don’t think this is right.

In the first place, I can’t imagine Asora getting so overflowed with people. And to commit genocide because of this foreseeable future, that’s just...no, there’s a part of it that has a point.

It is true that problems should be dealt with before they sprout, but... even so...

I feel like I am being inquired about my stance here.

In that case, I won’t be developing the mountains and sea completely.

“...Then...” (Makoto)

“...”

“I will clearly establish somewhere that there should be no fights over territory. I will also arrange things on their side as well. It is true that I don’t know about the future, but if I leave word that I don’t wish for that to happen, there’s a high chance that both sides will respect that. Is that okay?” (Makoto) Also, this is not a nation of humans or hyumans.

There’s a lot of races with long longevity, and are different in nature.

“...Of course, I don’t mind. This is just my personal opinion but, I think that in the future, it will be necessary for Makoto-sama to show your will clearly. I think it will be good practice to try that even if it’s in small matters in Asora.” (Tamaki) “Thanks.” (Makoto)

“My honest impression is that Asora is an incredibly ideal land. Yeah... just like an Utopia.” (Tamaki) “You are exaggerating, Tamaki.” (Makoto)

Tamaki giggles and bows once.

She is done huh.

Ideal land...Utopia huh.

Tamaki should know about the words denoting those kind of places, like: Elysion, Agarta, Eden, Heaven, Shangri-la, Mount Penglai. And yet, why did she choose to call it Utopia?

When she is the one saying it, I feel like there's some sort of meaning behind it.

In the first place, I myself...don't like the word Utopia that much.

Because of the name's origin, and the circumstances of it.

Well, for a Japanese person, the word heaven is probably the better wording for it. To denote an ideal place, that is.

If Asora is thought of as a place similar to heaven, that would make me happy.

Yeah, let's change gears.

“Asora is calm then huh.” (Makoto)

It is as if heaven is telling me to go to Lorel.

Heaven, not the Goddess.

Okay, my hesitation has disappeared.

I have also resolved myself.

Let's head to that dark, confined, and unpleasant -no, extremely unpleasant dungeon.

Right.

...After this, when I go to the shrine and I see people there, I will properly tell them that it isn't a place to pray at me. On top of that, I will ask them to visit frequently.

Chapter 238: Step Up

A sensation of floating and slight intoxication.

We who had come to attend the class of Raidou-sensei, were surprised by the several tens of new students that were going to participate.

Since the turmoil with the variants, the light in the eyes of the students that attend this academy have changed quite a lot.

...Well, it was the same for us, in a different meaning though.

(This is...a barrier. But for what purpose?)

The moment the class begun, Raidou-sensei and Shiki-san were 'cooperating' to form some kind of magic.

And then, along with that sensation I felt not long ago, everyone was isolated in some sort of barrier.

The figures of Raidou-sensei and Shiki-san are nowhere to be seen.

(Eh? There's no one else aside from me?!)

If it was only Shiki-san, the class would normally advance close to the boundaries of common sense, but in the case of Raidou-sensei, it doesn't work that way.

That person does outrageous things at times.

For example, calling strong mamonos that I don't even know where he brought them out from and have them fight the students.

...But lately, when Shiki-san leaves the class and only Raidou-sensei is left, he makes us do quite the absurd trainings.

Well, that means he is seriously looking at us and doing what he can, so it actually...makes me happy as well.

But in this time's lesson where newcomers are participating, there's no way those two are doing the same lesson for everyone.

Think.

In order to be employed in the Kuzunoha company, I have to get

stronger.

And for that sake, the thing that I can't neglect is to think and deal with the situations.

(Illusion magic huh. Isolation and illusion. They are caging us with that, most likely.) My body can move.

But I am not even sure if I am actually moving it.

From the ground of the outskirt field, black muddy monsters come out and were approaching me.

I could feel clear hostility so I intercept them.

I can use my arrows and spells as normal.

They show effect.

But at this rate, there will be no end to it.

Since I have sensed this situation is illusion magic, the method to break this deadlock is to conquer the spell.

With the intention of confirming how much leeway I have, I purposely receive an attack that I can tell I will be able to recover from.

“!!”

It hurts.

It hurts quite a bit.

My skin was cut as normal and blood came out from it.

I immediately heal the wound with healing magic.

If it were the illusion magic we learn, even if it is magic that's being strengthened with the barrier, I shouldn't be receiving damage since I have already seen through it as an illusion.

But this is something that Raidou-sensei and Shiki-san cooperated to set up.

Common sense doesn't work.

There might be the possibility that the barrier is only for isolation, and

the illusion actually doesn't have anything added to it.

And in truth, I can't sense the presence of Jin and Sif, who were right by my side, and the other members. I can't even hear their voices.

Rather than fearing this situation, I could tell that fear of those two teachers was being born slightly inside of me.

Suddenly, the body of the black muddy mamonos had expanded, their bloodthirst had increased even more, and their movements had grown sharper.

I see, so that's how it is.

What a bad natured illusion.

"But this is an illusion. Also, this is a class. That's why...it can be broken. It can definitely be broken!"

There's no way I can't overcome this.

That's one of the things I, Amelia Hopelace, have learned after being trained in Kuzunoha company.

As long as it is not actual combat, Raidou-sensei and Shiki-san rarely do things that are impossible to overcome.

In the days like today where everyone is made to do the same...the lesson's content is not over with just this!

I parry the muddy mamonos and defeat them while I move around and search for seams in the barrier or any hint that can serve to break the illusion.

Without taking much time, I found it.

That place where the scenery was slightly warping.

I boost my magic power, clad it into my arrow, and shoot it there.

"I did it!" (Amelia)

I could feel that peculiar sensation of a barrier crumbling.

As if a thin skin was being peeled, the world with black muddy

mamonos overflowing was disappearing, and I returned to the place that has the same landscape.

I could tell that the upper half of my body had sprung up.

So I was...sleeping.

I look at my surroundings.

Jin and Daena were the same and were looking around restlessly.

...So I wasn't the first.

There was slight regret in my chest.

The words Shiki-san used to warn me a number of times resurfaced: 'You don't have as much talent as the others'.

Even when I sacrifice my sleep time to train, I don't know if I will be able to surpass my limits.

And in reality, even when I am training like this, there's Jin or someone else that's on par or ahead of me. Really, geniuses are so troublesome.

But...that's fine.

At the very least, I am able to keep their pace.

If I just close the distance bit by bit, I will someday be able to catch up with them...right?

"...Eh?"

As I was thinking this, Raidou-sensei and Shiki-san were looking at me and were showing a surprised face.

What's wrong?

...Did they think...I was less capable than this?

Uh, if that's the case, that's pretty shocking.

At our surroundings, there's still Sif, Yuno, Izumo, and Misura, who are groaning in their sleep.

The new kids are all wiped out and writhing.

Being in third place is, well, not that bad, I suppose.



“Jin beat them all down and escaped by chance, Daena used strengthening magic on his fist and found the seam by chance.” (Makoto)
“Yeah.” (Shiki)

“They were unintended escapes.” (Makoto)

“Right. It seems like we will need to place restrictions the next time we do something like this.” (Shiki) “Tomoe, who is specialized in this, would have been able to do better than this though. Well then, I will head to where those two are.” (Makoto) “Yes. I have prepared your special bow and arrows. Go ahead.” (Shiki) What Shiki gave me were not arrows with an arrowhead, but arrows that have a suction pad as their head.

The bow is also not the same as the one I use normally, but a special one that I use at the academy with the students.

Moreover, it is quite the crude one.

It is a lot smaller and weaker than the bow and arrows that I first received from the Highland Orcs in this world.

In order to work as a teacher in this school, I learned Feather Touch EX to hold back, but Shiki said that even with that, people will be at death’s door.

I could only laugh at that.

When I was sniping my students in the lessons, I obviously didn’t aim for their vitals.

But Jin and the others are already at the phase where they are doing a step up, so it seems like Shiki thought of a way I can properly use a bow... and this is the result of it.

Really, how did it turn out this way?

“...Hoh~”

“Hm?”

Shiki let out a voice as if he didn't expect something.

I search for the reason of it, and look around the students that are still sleeping and I see that one other student had woken up.

Heh~, I can understand why Shiki is surprised.

It is Amelia.

It wasn't by chance, she actually broke through the illusion properly.

That's impressive.

Just in case, I made it so that the difficulty of breaking the illusion lowered as time passed on.

Even when taking that into account, the time Amelia took to wake up was fast.

In essence, she is at the top.

"Is Amelia's resistance against magic strong?" (Makoto)

"Her resistance to magic? That's not something that increases often, but...this is surprising. No matter how much she has trained, that girl had..." (Shiki) "That girl is Shiki's favorite after all. She is giving out an aura of 'I love Shiki-san' from her whole body, but well, that's not bad." (Makoto) "Raidou-sama, it is not as if I am teaching Amelia because of a reason like that, I just..." (Shiki) "Yeah yeah, I understand. If that really were your reason, in your case, it would end up with you teaching practically all the female students and taking care of them." (Makoto) It would really turn out that way, no joking.

Well, anyways, it seems like a new talent of Amelia has been discovered, maybe?

That girl is pretty versatile in a lot of things after all.

She has a tendency to only have small grains in each part, but it is impressive that she is able to do so many things.

"...Regarding the part-time jobs, it is certainly true that more than 80% of the female students said that they wanted to take part in it, but...how to

say it, it is vexing.” (Shiki) “Well then, I will be going there as Raidou-sensei and corner those three a little more with my bow and arrow.” (Makoto) Rather than archery, this reminds me of when I played at the shooting stands in the festivals.

It is now safe to shoot at the vitals I have been avoiding before, so let’s aim for them.

Even if it’s not a threat, receiving attacks at the places that are directly connected to death is dangerous in itself, and I think they will seriously try to oppose it.

Ah, right.

This bow is like a Youkyuu.

It gives off that kind of feeling.

It has suction pads though.

I have to try hard in a different meaning so that I don’t end up playing around.



“Sen...pai...if you continue taking a class like that, one of these days, you will die.”

“Shut up. Also, I won’t die, so don’t worry. At worst, they will bring us back right as we are about to anyways.” (Jin) “Jin, instead of calling it not dying, it is more like...we are not allowed to.” (Misura) “Stop it...Misura. Jin, Amelia, and I, had to face hell again after we conquered that illusion, you know? Anyone would want to vent some steam.” (Daena) “That was... how to say it, it was practically horror. You three, how many tens of times did you die?”

“After somehow waking up, I was watching together with Onee-chan. I wonder, is it really possible to hit the head, heart, and neck so frequently without any magic? I began thinking that he was holding some sort of incredible instant-kill weapon.” (Yuno) “...Hey.” (Amelia)

“What is it, Amelia?” (Izumo)

After safely(?) finishing the class of Raidou-sensei that seems to have stepped up in difficulty, we were doing the customary contemplation meeting.

A number of kouhais still had pale faces, and even with that, they still stuck to us all the way here. They followed us to the library.

The reason why I immediately rejected the words of the kouhai A that instantly began crying, was because after breaking out from the illusion magic, we faced the bow and arrows of Raidou-sensei and received fatal wounds several times –no exaggeration.

We could tell that he was holding back, but that in itself was frustrating. He hit us repeatedly.

I can't deny that I feel like crying.

Within that group, Amelia who was as equally dejected and silent, had spoken.

Izumo noticed it and asked Amelia, and she laughed weakly and continued her words.

“He said that he didn't aim for the eyes because, even with suction pads, it was still dangerous. It is true that if you are using a bow, shooting at the eyes is pretty effective and we are also taught that it is a place that can bring certain death. But from how it felt, I think that he would have been able to shoot at both of our eyes even when we were moving all around...”
(Amelia) Eyes.

Seriously?

“...Ah right, Sensei spoke about that with father before. He said that using black coated arrows to shoot at the opponent's eyes was really effective in night warfare. He said that if there's moonlight, you can shoot as much as you wanted and the bow would be peerless.” (Yuno) Yuno threw in information of Raidou-sensei.

“It is not that the bow is peerless, but more like, Raidou-sensei himself is though.”

“Even with a bow and arrows that are practically toys, when it hits you, it still reverberated in my body. Sensei and Shiki-san said that it doesn’t have any power, but I saw my life flash before my eyes several times.” (Daena)
Daena said this with eyes as if his soul had left him.

I felt the same way.

Sensei said things like: ‘This is no time to be having revolving lanterns’, so he probably has had those kind of experiences before.

In other words, there’s people out there that are able to make that Raidou-sensei feel the same way as us.

I don’t want to think of that.

I feel like I will have to do my best so that I don’t enter that state.

How fearsome is the revolving lantern state.

“At any rate...even though my main job is mage, it took me more time to break through the spell compared to Jin and Daena. That’s shocking.” (Sif)
Sif was feeling down.

Now that she mentions it, in this time’s illusion magic, Sif took quite a long time to break through it.

...In my case, I was rampaging around and it went well. That’s what I was about to say, but I refrained from.

That doesn’t serve as comfort.

“Same here. It made me realize that increasing the amount of elements you can use and the cards in your hand doesn’t mean that your field of vision has expanded.”

“To think that even you senpais are having it hard...”

All of the candidate kouhais that followed us all the way here are the people that had climbed from the academies at the surrounding towns and reached all the way here to the main academy of Rotsgard.

They are a group that had focused in one talent to begin with, so when coming to the main academy, it gets difficult to satisfy the level of the

other fields that are being requested.

I also don't like the policy of the main academy to demand a minimum level of skill in set areas from all the students though.

In a sense, the lessons of Raidou-sensei have the same policy, so it probably feels even more difficult because of that.

"...The first time we took the class of Raidou-sensei, we were simply showed a mock battle between Raidou-sensei and Shiki-san. At that time, we were probably a lot weaker than you guys here, so they probably didn't do something like breaking through illusion magic so suddenly because of that. That's why...I might be slightly jealous of you guys. I don't have any intentions of having you guys catch up or surpass me, but I can tell you this: as long as you follow the lessons of that sensei, you definitely won't get weaker." (Jin) I don't know the real intentions of those two. But even if for a bit, I certainly did feel this way.

That's why...I don't care if they stay in the class or not, that's their own choice, but I at least encourage them.

"Right. At the very least, I don't regret at all continuing until now. Your career choices will definitely widen. If you try hard, you can even get bonus training, you know? That training is also incredible, so I recommend it." (Misura) Misura smilingly continues after me.

But at the latter half, I felt like darkness showed slightly.

Well, he is trying to encourage them like I am doing, so let's not touch that topic. Yeah.

"Saying things like: 'I am going to die', is too soon. Continue, there's no problem. This is the class in this academy that can make you the strongest. I can say this with certainty. If you still want to run away after we have said all this...being married as a student is the best, you know? All your escape routes disappear completely. Your wife and child are the strongest." (Daena) Daena was...I am not sure if he is trying to encourage them or implicitly deny marriage.

It is true that in the beginning, he was the one who wanted to escape the

most.

At those times, he muttered things like: 'I have a family' and 'I have to show results, or else' as he continued climbing.

"If you are a mage, this class here will change your world. You will have to train your body no matter what after all. You will be taught that it is necessary. Your brain and body; you will be able to train both. There's no class that can compare. You can tell that to the other kids that are not here. With more numbers, the difficulty of Sensei's class will increase after all. It is something to be thankful for, but this is a powerful medicine that you are required to take in diluted at first though." (Izumo) Izumo makes a bitter smile as he shows the muscles in his arm.

Even if slender, it has a number of scars on it, and moreover, there's clearly more muscle in it than before.

His pure white skin was now tanned.

Even as a mage, what serves as your foundation is in the end, your body.

This is also a basic of Raidou-sensei's class.

"Hm...I don't really have anything special to say though. You guys are all people that have climbed up with your own efforts instead of relying on your pedigree, right? Then you must already understand that it will feel easier eventually, and that you will use up all your strength eventually, right?" (Yuno) Because Yuno comes from a household with a big company, she is seen as an Ojou-sama.

Or more like, she is actually an Ojou-sama.

Rembrandt company has enough capital to buy a small country.

But from her words, rather than having the eyes of an Ojou-sama, it looked more like the eyes of the hungry workers that work in a company.

"Right. It is assured that you won't die, but if you didn't have the resolve of betting your very self, you wouldn't gone through the trouble of coming all the way here. There's plenty of easier paths you could have taken after all. This is only a possibility, but there's the chance that you can get close

to Raidou-sensei and the Kuzunoha company, you know?” (Sif) Sif is more of the utility view huh.

But I concur with the ‘assured that you won’t die’.

If you don’t test yourself now, lay yourself bare and train to your bones, for what reason did you even come to this academy?

If you are only trying to graduate from here to gain status, you wouldn’t even get close to Raidou-sensei.

Because it will only make it hard for you.

“...Your trump cards and your best; show them all here. No matter what you bring out, no matter how much confidence you have in them, they definitely won’t work. Consider it a blessing that you will be able to learn this in class rather than in actual combat. Become stronger and stronger, and find the next stage. Within the lessons of Sensei and Shiki-san, we have learned new skills that we wouldn’t have been able to think of before. If you want to find real trump cards that you can really rely on... there’s no place as better as this to come up with those ideas. I am looking forward to the day when you guys can settle down as our kouhais.”

(Amelia) It seems like Amelia is trying to teach them the importance of showing all of their power.

At first, we also tried to hide our trump cards a lot and tried not to show it to others.

But that was truly pointless.

We should have shown them and quickly aim for higher heights.

If they are going to stay in this class and do this from the very start, the things they can obtain will increase.

The time to breakup the meeting has come, and the kouhais muttered: ‘we will try and do our best’. Looking at their visage, I made a wry smile.

Now then, I wonder how many people will remain.

Sensei said that he presently didn’t have any plans of cancelling classes, and the reconstruction of the town has finished its first stage.

Train and be trained.

My student life will change little by little.

I am looking forward to that.

Chapter 239: And then, opening up...

“Eh?! You are going to Lorel Union?!”

“Yeah, I have a little business there.” (Makoto)

Hah...

How many times does it make it now?

Just in case, I thought about telling my acquaintances in Academy town that I will be heading to Lorel Union, beginning with representative Zara, but...

As I reported to each one of them, I also told them that this won't be affecting my other works. But for some reason, the other people that I haven't met yet are coming to my place only knowing that 'I will be going to Lorel Union(going faraway)'.

I somehow finished my planned round of greetings and returned to my store at Rotsgard, and in there, a dizzying amount of people were intruding in the store.

...Among those, the office personnel of the academy was the worse.

When he noticed me, he pushed his way through to where I am with a ghastly expression.

And then, he suddenly fell to his knees and crawls up to my leg rather than Shiki who is at my side. He clings onto it and wailed: 'You liar!'.

In this academy town where the reconstruction is continuing and a good amount of people have returned, a happening like this occurred at broad daylight. Moreover, it is not a woman, but a man.

It is a situation that only spells trouble.

For a second, I thought that I went too far and a student somewhere had complained about it, but well, using the word 'liar' was bothering me.

After calming him down, I try asking him. He said that he received information from a certain source and a third party stating that: 'I will be going to Lorel, so I will be absent from the academy for several months'.

...This is just my opinion but... information from a certain source and a third party combined isn't really trustworthy.

It is on the level of reading jargon from the sports section of the newspaper and jumping to your own conclusions.

Also, he hasn't received any notification to cancel class from me or Shiki. In the first place, even if they received such a notification, they wouldn't have accepted it anyways, and as his stress reached astronomic levels, he felt that this would be lots of trouble so he rushed here with an expression of impending doom.

Just as he said, I haven't given any notification to cancel my class, and there's no error in that either.

It is true that I am going to Lorel, but that's a business that has nothing to do with the academy, so I don't plan on cancelling classes.

After I explained to him that 'no matter what method of transportation we use, I intend to continue classes as scheduled', I had him leave.

I have done the same explanation over and over again, and after I thought I finally finished with everyone, this time it was Jin.

Aren't you here to work part-time?

No well, I don't have experience in part-time jobs, but you know, since you are working under me, our standings should change a bit, right? I am your boss, you know?

Isn't that how it works?

"Eh, uhm...what about the class—?!" (Jin)

A light slap sound resounded and the head of Jin lowered.

"Jin! You are in the middle of work!" (Amelia)

The paper fan of Amelia hit the back of Jin's head directly and cut off his words.

When I look at the paper fan she is holding, the word 'pain' is written on it.

Ah, it is the one that hurts.

I remember I was told that they made three types of paper fans: one that simply makes a loud sound but doesn't hurt; one that doesn't match the sound it makes and increases the pain; and the soundless one that hurts the most.

Of course, they are joke goods.

...The first one, that is.

Doing tsukkomis in the middle of work is questionable as well, but this is the backyard of the store anyways.

The two of them are arranging the inventory here.

That's why it is barely acceptable.

"!!! Ame...lia! You...that...hurt." (Jin)

Jin was holding his head with both hands.

He is so pained that his words are not coming out properly.

In the words of Eris, the one that has sound and pain is still 'too soft'.

...It is because she said something like that that instead of only two, a third one was created.

That girl is actually pretty smart though...

It seems like the soundless and painful one: 'didn't produce blood, tears, or pain', and with those words in mind, it was created.

In the first place, this was created as a punishment tool for Eris.

So there's no point if it's 'too soft'.

By the way, the last version doesn't have 'pain' written on it, it has a skull mark.

"I'm sorry, representative. I will continue right now." (Amelia) "No well, I did answer him as well. Let me tell you then. Jin, there's no change in the class. That's why, do your best without worrying." (Makoto) "T-Thank-ssu!" (Jin)

“...Don’t get too poisoned by Lime’s style of speaking, okay? If you are going to learn from someone, make that person Akua or someone like that. That would be safer.” (Makoto) Safety is best.

Safety is important.

This is a truth that people normally don’t realize.

“Yes!” (Jin)

“Waka~, Waka~”

“Especially the small one that’s coming now, don’t learn from her. Or it will be too late.” (Makoto) Too late is not good, definitely not good.

I notice the owner of the voice that called out: ‘Waka’, and make a bitter smile.

Maybe Jin and Amelia felt the same, they made a slightly troubled expression.

Well, even when she is like that, she is capable and she is also their senpai.

“What’s up, Eris?” (Makoto)

“Ah, Waka~. To think that you are actually looking after the part-time greenhorns yourself, what an admirable representative! A model of merchants!” (Eris) “It is getting stuffy in here, and I feel like I am being bad mouthed. By the way, aren’t your hobbies slowly getting more similar to Tomoe?” (Makoto) “At first, it was by force, but...in the end, I got used to it the more it was forced into me~~.” (Eris) “Hey hey.”

“But lately, she has brought out things like period dramas, PCs, and western stuff. I have now learned about her depth and have opened my eyes~~.” (Eris) “...”

“Well, the screen is still rustic and instead of calling it a PC, it is more like a word-processor though. It is thriving in a good sense which is something I love.” (Eris) “...I see.” (Makoto)

“That’s right~~, hehe.” (Eris)

“And, what’s your business?” (Makoto)

Did she watch some sort of big play somewhere?

It is Eris we are talking about, so she is probably focusing on weird things like the killer techniques of the actors.

I understand that you are itching to talk about it, but I decided not to touch that topic today.

“Hm, how cold. But that part is what makes you good, is what one of the Gorgons said, you know? Also, you have a guest.” (Eris) “I didn’t have any appointment though. Who is it?” (Makoto) Of course, I didn’t retort about the Gorgon.

Jin and Amelia haven’t met the Gorgons yet...probably.

In the future, I plan on having them fight the Gorgons as opponents that can defeat you the instant you encounter them.

“It is a companion of those younglings here. Gizumo...or was it Rizumo?” (Eris) “Izumo.” (Makoto)

“Fufufu, how was it, Waka? Just by adding one syllable, I was able to change his name into a scary and cute monster, and even a white and beautiful container.” (Eris) “Don’t play around with people’s names. Izumo huh, that’s unusual. Well, I will see what he has to say.” (Makoto) “Then I will guide you~.” (Eris)

“Eris, you don’t need to. Help out the two—” (Makoto)

“Since they were so slow, I already finished half of it. The remaining can be done by those two. With their pace, they should be able to finish in around an hour.” (Eris) “...Nothing escapes you.” (Makoto)

“Without fail. Banana?” (Eris)

“Okay okay. Well then, Jin and Amelia, I am counting on you for what’s left. Go at your own pace.” (Makoto) “Yay! Hey, do your best, younglings!” (Eris)

Eris moved ahead in high spirits.

She had both of her hands at the back of her head and was in a good mood.

“No way. She really finished everything on that side...” (Amelia) “Are you telling me that when you are at the level of Eris-san, you can arrange the inventory by simply speaking? That’s a whole different dimension. How scary is the clone law.” (Jin) “Was it a law? Wasn’t it a skill name?” (Amelia)

I leave the two that were shuddering at the pleasant work of Eris, and head to the store where Izumo is waiting for me.



“And so, what did you want to talk with me about without the presence of Shiki?” (Makoto) Izumo had a meek face as he waited.

The words that came out were Lorel Union.

I thought it was going to be that topic again, but with an expression as if brooding over something, he said that he wanted to speak alone with me.

This is really something unusual.

Because Izumo clearly relies on Shiki more than me.

But the home of Izumo is Lorel Union, and he is a student at the academy we have no hostility towards.

Since he went through the trouble of coming here, I decide to listen to what he has to say.

We couldn’t just have a conversation in the store, so we went to my room.

“You are going to Lorel Union, right?” (Izumo)

“For a negotiation. Let me clear this first, there’s no changes in the class schedule.” (Makoto) “Ah, yes. So, what part of Lorel are you heading to?” (Izumo) ...It looks like he is quite agitated.

Izumo is the type that would ask a lot of things like: ‘how are you going to continue class as normal if you are heading to Lorel?’ and ‘How are you

going to be returning here?'.

“...We are heading to a city named Kannaoui. From there, well, we will be heading to the dungeon.” (Makoto) “?!!! Could it be...you are heading to the great dungeon Yaso-Katsui?!” (Izumo) “As expected of a famous place in Lorel. That’s right. In Rotsgard, there was no one who knew this name aside from the adventurers.” (Makoto) Without nodding or making any sort of reaction to my words, Izumo maintained his mouth shut.

However...looking at this, does Izumo have some sort circumstances with this dungeon?

Now that I think about it, Shiki said something Izumo’s household before.

“...Is that negotiation going to be with...the Ikusabe or the Osakabe?” (Izumo) “None, it is with a mercenary group called Picnic Rose Garden.” (Makoto) “...”

“...What’s wrong?” (Makoto)

The strained face of Izumo had suddenly turned into an emotionless one.

I can’t even tell if he is surprised.

And he said something that bothered me as well.

Ikusabe? Osakabe?

Those are names I haven’t heard from Sairitz-san either.

Now that I think about it, I am going to be receiving a promissory note that can let me go anywhere, but I haven’t really been told about the details of the country itself.

The most I have heard is that there’s no civil wars and it is mostly peaceful.

When I asked if it is slightly stormy there, she told me: ‘In our territory, only a little’, and laughed.

That ‘territory’ of hers is a real scary one.

But well, every large country must have their own share of political strife, and if it's only that, it can be counted as peaceful.

Hm, right.

Ikusabe is the family name of Izumo.

Ah!

If I remember correctly, Shiki said something about Izumo and the main and branch family at Lorel.

I see.

Are Kannaoui and Yaso-Katsui places that his household possess a strong influence?

That's why Izumo was bothered by that destination of ours.

Wait, places where his household possess a strong influence?

If that's really the case...does that mean that Izumo is from quite a distinguished family?

Could it be...he is an actual Waka-sama?!

"Picnic...Rose Garden..." (Izumo)

"Yeah."

"The safeguards of Yaso-Katsui dungeon. That mercenary group?" (Izumo) "That's right. I'm surprised you know." (Makoto)

"Sensei!!"

"Uo, what's wrong, Izumo?" (Makoto)

"Please don't bother with me...with someone like me!!" (Izumo) "Hah?" (Makoto)

"It is fine! No matter if Sensei holds the side of Ikusabe or Osakabe, it just doesn't matter anymore!! I somewhat understand that Sairitz-sama has finally made her move after all!" (Izumo) Izumo suddenly stood up and poured some intense words at me who is still sitting.

I can't understand at all.

I am sorry but, I am not really involved in any of what he is saying.

Not that I think about it, I feel like I am now pretty used to matching my tone when speaking, like in the times when I speak with the other teachers. It might be imprudent of me to be thinking this at this moment though.

“Calm down. I will say this clearly, I don’t understand anything of what you are saying. It is true that Sairitz-sama has spoken to me, but it is a negotiation with the mentioned mercenary group. I have not heard about the Ikusabe or the Osakabe at all.” (Makoto) Moreover, she didn’t tell me to keep this a secret.

It seems like the mercenary group is quite the big shot in Lorel, so it is not strange for him to know about them. So leaving that aside, she didn’t say a single word about Izumo.

“ ... ”

“I was told that if it is me, I would be able to pull it off. I will bring along some companions and negotiate for a bit with the mercenary group. That’s all.” (Makoto) “Uhm, Sensei, you said ‘for a bit’ but...do you really know where those people are?” (Izumo) Izumo was in the middle of a roller coaster of emotions, but it seems like he has entered a lull state and asks me with a serious expression.

“Of course. Inside Yaso-Katsui labyrinth, right?” (Makoto) “...Is that all?” (Izumo)

“I was told that they are based 20 floors underground.” (Makoto) “Yeah, that’s correct.” (Izumo)

“I honestly feel it is a complete pain to do this, but we are the ones that want to negotiate with them, so it can’t be helped.” (Makoto) “...Sensei, how many do you see here?” (Izumo)

He lifts two fingers in front of me.

“Two.” (Makoto)

“Then, this?” (Izumo)

“Five.” (Makoto)

“Then, what about this?” (Izumo)

“Ten. By the way, what are you trying to achieve with this, Izumo-kun? Even I know that the double of that is twenty.” (Makoto) “The 20th floor underground of that labyrinth!! Is not a place that you can simply go for a bit to have a negotiation, you know?!!” (Izumo) “I understand. It is dark, confined, and honestly, I don’t feel like doing it.” (Makoto) “Dark, confined?!!” (Izumo)

“It might take two days; if I count the negotiation, it will probably take around three days.” (Makoto) “Impossible Impossible Impossible Impossible Impossible!!” (Izumo) What’s with that shower of words as if using a rush attack?!

His tongue said that really smoothly.

He can become a sales announcer.

“I will say this again and again, calm down.” (Makoto)

“Impossible!! I refuse to! There’s no way I can calm down! Eastern part of Lorel, former capital: Kannaoui! And what has existed since ancient times and brought up Kannaoui, the Yaso-Katsui valley and its labyrinth that extends underground!” (Izumo) “Oh~.” (Makoto)

“And then, there’s the legendary mercenary group that’s said to have been created by the Wise to protect our ancestors, Picnic Rose Garden!” (Izumo) That name...really doesn’t fit.

That’s why I am sure there’s no doubt a Wise(japanese person) was involved in the creation of that mercenary group.

Not as legends, but people that actually existed.

“...It seems like Sensei really didn’t know this. Okay then, I will teach you. Ignorance is a sin at times, but there are times when it is easy to atone for those sins. It is okay to just know about it at the time you need to know.” (Izumo) “No well, I have already received information to a certain extent...” (Makoto) Actually, I even think that there’s no need to know

more aside from the fact that we will be negotiating.

No matter how much you tell me about the place being confined, gloomy, and dark, I will not be happy at all anyways.

I can make the inside bright unlike games, I don't need to mind about mapping the place, and I can just single mindedly go down without caring about treasures.

First of all, this guy should stop those eyes of his.

Please stop those crazed eyes.

I would like more energetic eyes.

Kugh, did I step in some kind of landmine? I can't pinpoint it.

Was it about his family? Or was it the Picnic mercenary group? Maybe it is because of the 20th floor underground?

Or more like, aren't those mercenaries being really loved?

Is it really okay to bring them to Tsige?

From the way Sairitz-san spoke, they felt like problematic people...

"Please don't be so reserved. Sensei has really taken care of me, so it is only at this kind of moments where I can repay you. Information about Kannaoui, Yaso-Katsui, the labyrinth, Ikusabe and Osakabe household, and about the Wise and the legendary mercenary group. I will have you listen to everything thoroughly, okay?!" (Izumo) Yeah.

Rather than calling this a repayment, this is more like hearing him complain.

I have been thinking about listening to my students if they open up to me themselves, but...this kind of beginning is not to my taste!

Chapter 240: Raidou and Izumo

And so...with spiralling eyes as if in a trance, Izumo talks infinitely about his homeland, himself, among other things.

He was clearly afflicted by the status ailment 'Confusion'. There was no way he would be able to logically explain things to me in such a state. He was providing me a chaotic situation here.

Putting it bluntly...I have stopped listening since a while ago.

In the middle of his talk about a muddy blind love that was comparable to dramas, he talked about the folklore of Lorel and about the history of the city as an interval, but even if he returned to the drama from before, anyone would have a headache already.

But there have been a few moments when he said some important things as if nothing.

No matter how much of a headache this induces and how much saliva he is spitting out, I wouldn't have grown at all if I were to let the important information slip away.

Now then, I will just listen on the surface and nod at given moments, and at times, I brought tea as I wait for him to finish his talk.

Just saying but, I actually have a rough understanding of what he is talking about.

...

Well, it is that. The discord between Tokyo and Kyoto, and that discord heading into a disastrous direction is something that happens even in parallel worlds, probably.

It seems like Naoi and Kannaoi have a bad relationship similar to that.

Next, about the problem with the family of Izumo: the Osakabe household, whose homeland is in Kannaoi, had divided quite a long way in the past, and as a result, the Ikusabe household was born.

Ikusabe works as the sword and shield of Naoi, and as a branch family,

they have been serving under another household somewhere and steadily increasing their influence.

And so, in the present day, the influence of both households has become equal, and when the topic of having a relationship of equal standing was brought out, it didn't go well and became a muddy start.

The branch family that was cut off had gained power in order to be recognized by the main family, but they laughed at their efforts. Well, it is probably something like that.

I am not the type that watches dramas all the time, and honestly, I don't find these kind of things interesting.

...In Japan, there's the classic called Tale of the Genji, so it is probably popular for the general populace though.

In my days in middle school, I got interested in it and read it till the end, but well, I didn't understand what was so good about it.

The most I found enjoyable was how I could understand the atmosphere of the lifestyle the nobles had at those times.

I had read The Pillow Book around that time as well, and I remember that I got engrossed in studying things like the solar calendar, the lunar calendar, and the Tenpo calendar.

Well, I learned things like: until when Japan used the Tenpo calendar <1872>, and that the old lunisolar calendar of Japan is called the Gregorian calendar.

Even if I knew that, it didn't affect my test scores much.

I was simply satisfied learning it and I don't have a single regret about it.

My time is finite, and if I find something that interests me, I think it isn't bad to try and understand it without hesitating.

Whether those things are information about a certain delineated time in Japan, the bow, games and manga at times, and games where beautiful girls appear...

Rather than hesitating without doing anything, this is definitely not a

waste.

Since coming to this world, there have been points that have been useful, and looking at Lorel which is the place where the Japanese culture has sprouted, there might be some use to it as well.

Ah, Izumo's breathing is rough.

His face has finally returned to normal. Maybe it is over?

Well well, I have gone and reminisced my past while I waited.

"Fuh...fuh....."

"You have talked a lot. Drink some tea and calm down." (Makoto)

"Thank you...very much." (Izumo)

"Seriously, it really makes me feel pathetic to have a student of mine worrying about me." (Makoto)

No matter what he spoke of, I responded with a safe follow-up.

"That's not it!" (Izumo)

"It is. The fact that you are worrying about me means that the labyrinth looks a lot bigger than I am, right?" (Makoto)

"...No, I didn't say anything like that, and I don't think that way either." (Izumo)

"And about your family as well. If you wish for my help and ask for it, I don't mind lending a hand. But I...don't have any intentions of interfering in problems that you yourself are trying to resolve." (Makoto)

"Yeah." (Izumo)

"I don't plan on changing that stance of mine, and I also think of it as my own way of keeping a line as teacher and student. But...it seems like that ended up cornering you even more. Sorry." (Makoto)

"No! I didn't intend to cause any trouble to Sensei, and even when you didn't ask me to, I went and threw it all onto you like this... It is embarrassing. I heard rumors that Sensei and Sairitz-sama had met at the Academy festival, and since then, it has been piling up bit by bit." (Izumo)

“It is true that I got acquainted with her at that time. Right after, that unfortunate event occurred and made our relationship closer though. Regarding that, it doesn’t really have anything to do with you or your family.” (Makoto)

There’s no need to lie.

And in reality, not even the I of Izumo is involved in my relationship with the Lorel Empress.

“Thinking about it normally, that would be the case, but...when I am alone, I end up thinking about a lot of bad directions it might take... I know that’s not a good habit though.” (Izumo)

So Izumo had a habit of being delusional.

In my high school days, I was also the type that would keep my problems to myself and pile them up, so I can’t say much about others.

It is definitely better to consult with someone else, and yet, for some reason, I ended up trying to resolve it myself with my narrow perspective.

Moreover, you get stubborn about that one decision of yours.

I wonder why that happens?

Even when I look back at it, I don’t understand it well.

“From now on, confide with your friends. After one consultation about it, you actually feel more at ease. This time, you managed to do it with me, so it is not something you can’t do.” (Makoto)

“Hahaha, right.” (Izumo)

“I think they will be reliable, you know. Jin, Daena, Misura, Amelia; if it’s related to money: Sif and Yuno are the solution...well, the latter one is probably not a good idea to rely on though.” (Makoto)

“Yeah.” (Izumo)

It looks like Izumo has relaxed. He directed a smile at me and drunk his tea.

His eyes that were going round and round have returned to normal as

well.

He probably felt relieved now that he spilled what he had to.

“And so, if a student of mine relies on me, even if it is troublesome, I don’t intend to refuse. I don’t have any intentions of encouraging it either, but if you are troubled and need my help, don’t hesitate and come to me. So that it doesn’t bother you, I will ask for a fitting remuneration and accept it as a job.” (Makoto)

“...The work payment for Sensei...would be on the level of a small country’s budget, right? I won’t be able to pay it.” (Izumo)

“Of course, as long as you have the intentions of paying, I am willing to make it free of interest and no time limit. This is a privilege of my students.” (Makoto)

“First time I have heard of this.” (Izumo)

“Must be. I have created it just now for you.” (Makoto)

“...”

“And so, Izumo, what do you want to do?” (Makoto)

“Eh?”

“I have understood that your family has a lot of issues and that your position is delicate. And that you are worried about me regarding the matter with the labyrinth.” (Makoto)

Or more like, that’s all I could understand.

Because you know, Izumo’s talk was jumping around like a conversation between high school girls.

“...”

“If you want to, I can bring you with me and have you guide me in the labyrinth? Or do you want me to stand at your back as you talk with the Ikusabe household or the Osakabe household?” (Makoto)

“Ah, that’s...” (Izumo)

Izumo’s expression changes into a mix of surprise and agitation.

Why?

I thought I brought out the plan that can resolve things the quickest though.

“My only business there is with the mercenary group, and I have also heard about the dungeon from Sairitz-sama. Knowing that, I judged that there would be no problems. So if even with that you are still uneasy, I don’t mind bringing you with me. I did hear all you had to say after all.”
(Makoto)

“...No. If it’s Raidou-sensei, it is probably –no, it will definitely be alright. About my family...if Sensei were at my side, I feel like I would be able to settle as much as I wanted by speaking.” (Izumo)

“I see...” (Makoto)

Hm? Did he change his mind?

I somewhat felt that.

Looking at his state, he most likely won’t be holding it to himself, so it should be fine.

“But I will be doing it myself. One day...at a near future. Definitely.”
(Izumo)

“I see. I don’t know how long I will be able to teach you, but you still have plenty time left in the academy. Being troubled can become a step for growth. Be troubled as much as you want, together with your friends.”
(Makoto)

“...As I thought, Sensei is really amazing. Even though you look like you are the same age or younger, you really do make me realize the difference of our time.” (Izumo)

“Just so you know, my age is exactly how it looks, okay? If you want to tell someone that you feel that person has lived for several hundred years, you can tell that to Shiki.” (Makoto)

Because that’s exactly the case.

“There you go again. Please don’t deceive me with your jokes. What I

meant with 'difference of our time' was not the length of it, but the depth. One year, one month, one week, one day, one second; the depthness of that time was most likely different through its very roots. At present, I am trying to do my best to make that time as dense as possible though."

(Izumo)

"..."

I feel like I am being quite overestimated once again.

As a teacher, that's not really so bad.

It is not good to be seen as someone that can conveniently help them out, so I let them know beforehand that I will be receiving a recompense for it, but well, they probably won't be relying on me that often.

I am a teacher, not a convenient tool.

"I am truly sorry for today. Well then, I will be taking my leave!!"

(Izumo)

Izumo bows his head firmly, and without waiting for me to see him off, he ran off by himself.

"He let it all out and resolved a variety of things with that, huh. This is a lot better than having him return dejected. And so, Shiki, in the end, just what was that boy talking about?" (Makoto)

I call Shiki who was close.

He laughed as he came out.

"I didn't expect him to be so cornered. That was a slight miscalculation of mine. Being that troubled about something so stupid might be a privilege of the young." (Shiki)

"Stupid, you say. You really don't show mercy." (Makoto)

"And in truth, he did fall into his own delusions regarding the labyrinth and Waka-sama's power, and I don't think there's any worth in asking about the background of the labyrinth from the people of Lorel who worship this labyrinth like a divinity." (Shiki)

“They see it as divine and worship it huh. I haven’t heard that in this world but, it brings back memories.” (Makoto)

“Worshipping something that’s not the Goddess or the Spirits?” (Shiki)

“Yeah. In Japan, there are times when people deified and worshipped things that bring harm in order to appease them. I have heard that it is mostly things like curse Gods or Gods that don’t have good compatibility with people. A custom to appease them. Now that I am in a world where magic exists, I wonder how it works? There probably would have been different viewpoints.” (Makoto)

I stopped using the word ‘wicked God’.

That’s probably the influence of coming to this world.

Because I have begun thinking that just because it is an existence that brings harm to people, it doesn’t mean that they are evil Gods.

“Worship and appease them huh. What a peculiar faith.” (Shiki)

“I don’t know if that’s considered faith. Well, leaving that aside, I now understand the divinity of the labyrinth.” (Makoto)

If even the names of God Naobi and Yaso-Magatsuhi are involved, I can tell that the people of Lorel had this kind of thinking since quite a long time ago.

It seems like they have hot springs as well, and I certainly can understand why Tomoe wants to go.

I feel like the folklore and culture of Japan has sprouted in a strange way, but if even their way of thinking is different, it would be interesting.

“About the matter with Izumo’s household, it isn’t such a dead-end as he thinks it is. In the midst of the main and branch family, it certainly might be stuck in place, but problems regarding households are actually seen weakly from the outside. When you were looking at it from an outside perspective, it was filled with holes and places to retort, right?” (Shiki)

“Was it?” (Makoto)

I only thought that it was pretty muddy~.

Leaving aside the common sense of Lorel, from my point of view, it felt so far away that it surpassed my understanding.

It seems like in the households of the Edo period, this kind of things happened a lot, but in the common sense of present Japan, this is just...

“The old family of Kannaoui, Osakabe, expelled the Ikusabe family several hundred years in the past, and ended up serving a governing family in Naoi. This is history that is pretty well known in Lorel.” (Shiki)

“That means the Ikusabe household and Izumo-kun are famous people huh.” (Makoto)

“It is true that the Ikusabe have increased in family members, so it isn’t for certain, but at that rate, there would probably be the need for deep blood connection in order to get involved in it. The Ikusabe household works at both the outside and inside as a military family. To explain it in a more understandable way for Waka-sama, it would be like working as samurais and ninjas.” (Shiki)

“Hmph~ Oniwaban huh. They have a front and a back side, but there certainly were people that held the blood of a samurai, like Koga and Iga. Devoting themselves to the country as samurais and ninjas huh.” (Makoto)

That sounds kind of cool.

“Ah, Waka-sama, it is not the country they devote themselves to but an employer’s household. This is something I was surprised as well, but it seems like the Ikusabe household is serving the Kahara household. He didn’t say it directly, but from what he said, I think there’s no doubt.” (Shiki)

“Kahara. Kahara... You know, I have an acquaintance by the name Kahara-san. Moreover, it is someone that’s in the politics world.” (Makoto)

And so, that’s why Izumo had reacted that much.

It seems there’s no mistake.

“Yeah, that person is currently the top of the Kahara household. Sairitz Kahara. The world is a small place. When I heard this saying from Tomoe-dono, it didn’t click that much, but moments like this, this kind of words are truly adequate.” (Shiki)

“Right.” (Makoto)

“At any rate...the way you interacted with Izumo was splendid. You were able to loosen his distress even without me. Truly well done.” (Shiki)

“I-I see... I actually didn’t listen to half of what he said, you know?” (Makoto)

“Fufufu, don’t be so humble. I will arrange the details of Izumo’s information and submit them at a later time. When you have spare time... maybe when you are advancing in the labyrinth, you can check them out.” (Shiki)

“Thanks, I will do that.” (Makoto)

The household that Izumo’s family is serving is the one of Sairitz-san huh.

I feel like it has become kind of complicated.

Sairitz-san herself hasn’t said anything about Izumo or his family, so... for now, that’s a saving though.

No, is it truly a saving?

Won’t it turn into something even more troublesome?

Actually, this time I am bringing Tomoe and Mio, so I am quite optimistic since we would be able to deal with most problems.

I honestly want the problem to be within the range we can cope with.

“Also, what I was bothered about was the lovely and strongest fairy that protects the labyrinth, Mariko-san, and the existence of the darkness dragon or was it shadow dragon? The Superior Dragon of Lorel should be ‘Shadow Clad’, Doma. But...from what Izumo said, the one who created the Yaso-Katsui labyrinth is the Shadow Dragon, Futz. It is a name I haven’t heard before.” (Shiki)

“Now that you mention it...Sairitz-san also said Shadow Dragon, Futz... If I remember correctly, that place should be where the Superior Dragon, Doma, lives. Root also said that.” (Makoto)

Even if it's that pervert, he wouldn't go lying about the Superior Dragons.

I have Tomoe after all.

Futz, huh.

It is a name that has deeper connection to the legends of Japan compared to Doma.

That's how it is, but...in terms of troublesomeness, I feel like Futz is more dangerous.

But Doma should be currently in Root's place as an egg.

There's the chance that it has already been born, and someone has already returned him to his original place.

...Right, let's meet with Root once.

Let's hear about Doma and this guy called Futz.

Izumo didn't say anything about it after all.

“Anyways, Mariko-san huh. That's a person's name.” (Makoto)

“If it is a fairy from a dungeon, I wonder what kind of fairy it will be. Maybe a relative of dwarfs?” (Shiki)

“Mariko-san the dwarf huh. I can only feel bad vibes from it.” (Makoto)

“It would be good if the Eldwas know about it. It hasn't been mentioned before in a conversation, so the expectations are low.” (Shiki)

Futz and Mariko-san huh.

I have gathered a bit more information.



Back from the Kuzunoha company, Izumo had arrived at the park which might be quite the detour for a place to drop by.

This is the biggest and newest park in this town, with two big trees as its symbol.

In order to not forget about the variant incident, an inscribed stone monument has been made and has become the grave-marker for the many lives that were lost, and it is also a place that's treated as a location to comfort the spirits of the dead. It is a location that doesn't lack in people.

A water fountain, a forest, and a lawned plaza.

This place is a favorite of Izumo.

"It is different from the gardens in Lorel, but this place is special."

Sitting down on the bench, he talks to himself.

His expression was calm, and there's already none of that ghastly expression from before.

"After all...this bench, lawn, water fountain, arrangement of stones...are things that I myself made." (Izumo)

As a part of the reconstruction workforce, the students of Raidou had participated actively in the work.

This was a part of it as well.

For Izumo who used up all his magic power and mental strength, and was dried from physical strength as well, this place that serves as an achievement of his had become a special place for him.

He himself isn't self-aware, but for him, this town has already become a special place.

When he notices it in a near future, it will most likely become an important step.

"Sensei had seen completely through someone like me who he doesn't speak with much. Without using his employees at the store, he himself brought tea. I must have looked pathetic."

The smiles of the children that survived the incident, their parents that

were with them, and the elderly couples, healed the heart of Izumo.

Their joyful figure, for some reason, made Izumo proud.

The place that they themselves had created was being utilized by other people as they smile.

Without caring if they are human or demi-human, he was happy to see them like that.

“I...was troubled by myself, went to Sensei’s place as if venting, and spilled out everything. I was thinking about something incredibly despicable. Thinking that by doing this, Sensei might do something about all of it. That if it’s him, he would be able to achieve all of this in a cinch. Thinking that if that’s the case, he should quickly resolve it for me. I was thinking about something as stupid as that. I definitely thought about this somewhere inside my heart. At that class of his, people from the main and branch family were popping out like undead, so it made my unjustified resentment for Sensei even stronger. And I was told by Sensei in such a direct manner. But I have now noticed the dirty parts of myself.” (Izumo)

In the illusion that Izumo was shown at Raidou’s class, he saw people that he knew of wearing Lorel’s traditional armor and helmet.

They were voicing out their own desires as resignation and death approached Izumo.

The reason why he woke up a lot slower than his true capabilities are, was because he was shown something that he didn’t want to see and was distracted.

But Izumo didn’t consult with Jin and the others, and matched the talk of the others about seeing black muddy mamonos like everyone else.

“If it’s Sensei, he can easily conquer something like a dungeon, and it is most likely easy for him to meet Picnic Rose Garden. Even my household, if Sairitz-sama were to cooperate, it would fall tranquil in an instant. What I wish, what I want to do; everything I want can be easily done by that person. But then, it wouldn’t bring a closure for myself. That’s no good.” (Izumo)

On top of that, Raidou told Izumo that he would accept this as a job with no feelings of constraint.

For Raidou –Makoto-, that was a joke.

Because he thought that it was something that didn't require much effort, he probably would have accepted this request of Izumo with a payment comparable to that of a lunch.

Even the suggestion of his.

He simply said this because he really thought it was the most simple and easiest way to resolve it.

“Also, that joke of mine about a budget comparable to a small country... Sensei didn't deny it. If it's split payment, I would be able to pay that amount of money. ‘I will use that much amount of power’, is what Sensei was thinking huh.”

Greatly wrong.

An incredible misunderstanding.

For someone like Makoto, this was a rare fine-play of his.

“Then, the engagement with the princess of Osakabe, place of employment, and the matter of inheriting Ikusabe...I have to show him that I myself can resolve this and make it head in the direction I wish. I have reliable companions, and just as Sensei said, my academy life is still far from over!”

Standing up from the bench, he looks at the sight of the town from between the visible spaces of the trees.

The corners of his mouth silently lift.

Until now, he has only thought about increasing his strength as he lived his life in the academy.

He thought that in time, he would work at Lorel as one of the Ikusabe, and serve under the Kahara household.

In time, he would receive marriage proposals from around 4–5 brides,

train his children, and retire.

He didn't doubt or felt dissatisfied by the rails that were set for him.

But everything began to change when he met Raidou and his class.

It wasn't only the class.

His encounter with Jin and the others, who remained in the class, also played a big role for Izumo.

A person that has a clear desire; a person that has a family of his own and changed his desires; People that were on top of settled rails, and yet, confronted it in a completely different way from him; a person that was unbelievably devoted to her own path for someone.

And then, there's a person that was troubled like him.

Moreover, the Kuzunoha company that uses kanji in their store name, and the goods and employees.

The amount of fresh powerful medicine had changed Izumo in good and bad ways.

To the point that...he finally discovered a future different from that of his role in the Ikusabe household.

"Jin said that he was going to treat the kouhai candidates in Gotetsu, right? Let's join them."

Remembering his kouhai that were in a wiped out state, Izumo laughs.

But at the same time, he thought of them as cute.

Just like how Raidou had saved him in a way or another, they would also be able to obtain something from continuing the class of Raidou.

This is a thought that his past self would never think since this would mean his rivals would increase though.

For some reason, Izumo has grown able to think in this way.

Once again, the path of one of Raidou's students is beginning to build.

Chapter 241: East Gate, Mizuha

Lorel Union's east entrance gate, Mizuha.

It seems like more than 80% of the immigration and emigration of Lorel occurs here.

It is about the same size as Naoi and Kannaoui, and the security is also quite strict.

The reason of Root's inclination is because of Lorel's location.

When looking at a map, it can be seen immediately at a glance. Lorel Union has a lot of places with tall mountain ranges at the east side, west side, and south side.

There's some that are even higher than the clouds.

...From what I have heard of Sairitz-san, aside from those, there's a lot of mountains and forests, and there's few places that are open fields in the territory.

At the south side, even if you cross over the tall mountains, you will face the sea; at the west, you would be facing Tsige or the wasteland; and at the north, there's the Golden Highway and the Aion kingdom's area of influence.

The Dragon Knight unit is structured here, and within them, there's the flying dragon unit which serves in the fighting force and the transportation aspects as well.

But the land dragons that have a more calm temperament are utilized the most.

It is that, right? Being a Dragon Knight is like a romance.

This place seems to be the home of the Japanese people's vestiges who are known as Wise.

Honestly speaking, right now, I am pretty nervous.

Since seeing this place called Mizuha, I have been unable to calm down for some reason.

I have two reliable followers accompanying me, so I don't need to worry about the safety part though.

But the air is kind of...different.

A strange sensation like when you head to the capital of Tokyo and cross the hilly residential parts and arrive at Akihabara for the first time.

Is it the sensation of putting my hands into chaos?

“Waka, the air here is different. Just thinking about how we will finally arrive at Lorel, I am also getting excited.” (Tomoe) “There's also the scent of ingredients I have not smelled before. So that's the place where the Japanese knowledge has taken form. I am looking forward to it.” (Mio) “I'm kind of scared here though. I feel like I will be witnessing what the Japanese people, who have been released from common sense, have perpetrated.” (Makoto) “...Is that something Waka can say?” (Tomoe)

“If we were to line up the achievements of the Wise and Waka-sama's achievements, Waka-sama would probably be first place-desu wa.” (Mio) ...First place?

Aren't they placing me too high in the shelves?

I am not aiming to spread my small arms like Tomoki, you know?

It seems like that side isn't doing well, so at present, I am relieved.

But the princess seems to be interested in gunpowder, and that makes me uneasy.

The Empire is...how to say it, pretty dark.

It felt like they were even darker than the demon race.

“By the way, Waka.” (Tomoe)

“What?”

“It will soon be our turn.” (Tomoe)

“Right.”

Maybe because we lined up at early morning to avoid congestion, the length of the line wasn't long and the speed it advanced was pretty good.

We probably have been here for less than 30 minutes.

“You received the promissory note from Sairitz-san, right?” (Tomoe)

“It seems to be quite an incredible one, you know. She said it is a free pass to most places.” (Makoto) There’s no oversight in what Sairitz-san does. She really readied the promissory note quick.

Actually, I thought that a promissory note with strong efficacy would take a long time to issue, like when issuing a transition pass.

That’s why, even when Sairitz-san spoke as if it was going to take a few days, I thought it would actually take longer.

I underestimated her.

I have been shown that the Empress has an incredible amount of power in her country.

I bring out the promissory note that’s inside a pouch.

It has the shape of a shogi piece, and is made from a dull silver color metal.

Shiki says that it is made from a special alloy.

The craftsmanship at the surface part is probably a counter-measure for forgery.

It has a nostalgic writing on it, assuring the standing of the owner of it, and ‘asking’ to provide the maximum amount of accommodations in the various places inside the country.

Even I can tell that it isn’t simply ‘asking’.

Also, what’s at the surface part is a coat of arms, a family crest.

When I asked, they told me that it is the family crest of Sairitz-san, in other words, the Kahara household.

At the reverse side, there’s only her name and mark engraved on it.

When I received this from Sairitz-san, I tried asking about Izumo casually, but to my surprise, it seems like there’s 3 people in Rotsgard that are named Ikusabe-kun.

She said with a smile that the most connection she has is that she has talked a bit with them.

She easily affirmed the relationship that the Ikusabe household and the Osakabe household have.

It seems like it wasn't something important enough to hide.

Not only that, she laughed when I told her that Izumo had spilled out a variety of things to me.

Just in case, it was I who told her, so I would feel bad if he were to receive a punishment because of that, that's why I asked Sairitz-san to not punish Izumo for it.

If that doesn't work, I am sorry Izumo.

But she is always smiling, so I can't tell if she intends to forgive him or intends to give no mercy.

"What is it you want to say, Tomoe-san?" (Mio)

Mio asks Tomoe who has a pondering expression.

It is certainly strange for her to look like that only because she wants to confirm the effectivity of the promissory note.

In the first place, it isn't something to be troubled about.

"Umu, that's the exaggerated promissory note that was given to Waka?" (Tomoe) "Yeah."

"I was thinking that maybe there was no need for us to line up here. No well, we followed Waka and lined up as well, and it was fun to wait here though." (Tomoe) "'Ah.'"

Mine and Mio's voice overlap.

That's true.

There was no need to line up.

With this, we can go to Yaso-Katsui without any problems.

From how she said it, it seems to be quite the strong promissory note.

The commerce permission I received from the demon race before had an effectiveness that surpassed my expectations after all.

I remember that previous 'event'.

Showing that permission proof to the villages of the demons made them give an intense warm reception for our peddlers.

They cooked the livestock in the village that they have only a few of, and offer it just like that.

Even though we are heading there to sell food and necessities, I really have to question those actions of theirs.

Ah.

While at it, I also remembered the attire of the Forest Onis and the Gorgons that are going around the demon race territory.

If they wore a beard and a winter cap, they would look like the celebrity that goes around giving presents to all the kids in the world at christmas.

That's how much clothes they wear.

Well, it can't be helped. The demon race territory is pretty cold after all.

"...Tomoe, tell me that sooner." (Makoto)

"Speaking leisurely with Waka and trying to imagine how it is inside, was fun in its own way." (Tomoe) "It is a time of little significance anyways. Having times like this isn't so bad once in awhile." (Mio) Since there seems to be no problems, we decide to receive the entry inspection in line.

"The next one, show me your permission."

"Kuzunoha company, the representative Raidou and my subordinates: Tomoe and Mio." (Makoto) From the pouch, I take out the shogi piece –I mean, the promissory note, and show it to the scary-looking government official.

He has black hair.

His skin is slightly yellowish and a bit dark.

The darkish tone seems to be from suntan.

Sairitz-san's skin was pretty white, so...she probably has different kind of occupations in her country.

“Kuzunoha? So you are returning to the country. No wait, you are entering it? Hah?!”

If we hadn't received a promissory note and were able to enter and leave from wherever we wanted, we wouldn't have tried to enter from Mizuha.

Because crossing the mountains would have been easier for us.

Now that I think about it, Sairitz-san would be able to tell where this promissory note has been used, so she would be able to tell our movements in the country.

It is nothing to be troubled about, and in the first place, it guarantees our standing, so this much is a matter of course.

If we wanted to do something in secret, we just have to do it without using the promissory note, and I am also prepared to have a certain amount of people on the look out for us.

Maybe people from the Ikusabe household will be tailing us in secret.

Even if we find people doing that, I intend to just leave them be.

Later, I will have to tell Tomoe and Mio to not mind them.

“As expected, it wasn't a normal article-ja no. That woman, it seems like she splurged quite a lot-ja.” (Tomoe) “Of course-desu wa. Because for that person, this is a chance to invite Waka-sama –a new Wise– into her country after all.” (Mio) “Wise huh. It seems like there's not a single one at present, but I am quite interested in what they have left behind. Maybe I can find one or two people that have the same hobbies as Waka.” (Tomoe) “The family crest of the Kahara...and the mark of Sairitz-sama?! On top of that, a W-W-Wise-sama?!”

For some reason, this government official looked at Tomoe, Mio, and me, and has arbitrarily judged that I am a Wise-sama.

If Mio hadn't said Wise, he wouldn't have said that last part.

Moreover, those weren't the pitying eyes or the disappointed eyes that are normally directed at me, but eyes filled with reverence.

This really does get me.

I feel like even a dust-cloth with the name Misumi Makoto written on it could get framed in an art museum of Lorel.

People are gathering, and gathering, and gathering?!!!

"...Huh?"

"Hahaha, how pleasant. It is quite the reception, Waka!" (Tomoe)

"It is admirable that they have gathered spontaneously-desu wa ne."
(Mio) The two are laughing.

Not only the officials here, even the people lining at our back are gathering as well.

With this...my face has definitely been remembered.

"Raidou-sama! Please go ahead and pass!"

He lowered his head deeply...

He didn't ask me anything at all.

And yet, I have been allowed entrance.

Moreover, he used -sama.

I am being treated as a Wise little by little here.

Do I easily enter in the common knowledge of how a Wise would look like?

Well, it is certainly true that I don't have the face of people like Senpai or Tomoki who you would question if they are actually Japanese.

I probably would enter into the average looks.

"I will return you your promissory note!"

His head was still deeply lowered.

Just like that, he lifts both his hands and the promissory note was there.

“Thanks.” (Makoto)

“This is the third city of Lorel, Mizuha! We are mostly functioning as the entrance for the country, and we communicate with the central and local areas! Please allow me to guide you to the major establishments of our city, make the arrangements for your lodging, the departure arrangements, and all the other necessary things!!”

No no no!

Don't joke around.

I don't want you to do so much.

“I am grateful for your offer, but the guiding and arrangements are not needed. We want to relax ourselves and check things out –I mean, we have come here on the request of Sairitz-sama. There's some secrecy in it, so we can't receive your good will-ja.” (Tomoe) So you want to go around huh.

Your real intentions leaked out for a second there.

“I will tell Sairitz...-sama that the officials were faithful and capable ones-desu wa. That's why there's no need for hospitality. Your consideration is plenty enough.” (Mio) Mio somehow managed to put a –sama there.

Sairitz-san is a lot more important in Lorel than I imagined her to be.

No matter how many times I revise it, it just keeps getting bigger.

Well, in outline, the one that stands at the summit of rituals is the priestess, and the one that works as her assistant in a part of that role is Sairitz-san who is the Empress.

In my personal opinion, I thought that she was a big shot like one of the people in an Imperial Household Agency.

...In other words, uhm...she is not a bureaucrat that comes out often, and I thought she didn't have that much influence.

I did place her a bit higher than I originally thought, you know.

Even so, she was higher than the higher I thought of her.

At this rate, she is most likely higher than the higher I am already seeing her in. Is she an unbelievable influential figure?

Figures that are specialized in politics and figures that are specialized in rituals should be divided, and yet, that doesn't seem to be the case. Seems like, without knowing the internal affairs of the place, there's a lot of things you just can't simply assume.

"B-But—!"

"Idiot! Shut up!!"

In short, my two followers were telling the officers to not mind us.

And in response to that, one of the younger officers, who had offered to guide us in the sightseeing, was going to object and cling onto it, but...a bearded man that seems to be the person in charge, grabbed his shoulders and dragged him into the crowd of people.

No questions asked.

"Sorry for the inconvenience! If there's anything you want from us, don't hesitate to utilize us!"

"Thanks for the hard work. At that time, we are counting on you guys."
(Tomoe) Tomoe was not overawed by it and responds to the official in charge.

"My gratitude."

I also return some words as usual.

While feeling an unpleasant sensation, we stepped into the city of Mizuha.

With this, we have gone to all four major powers.

I hope that the prudent Wise were able to do proper follow-ups for the Wise that had their wild ideas running.



"Thanks for your hard work."

Thanking the informant, Sairitz has him leave.

A well lighted room, decorated colorfully and attentively.

It is the office room she has in Lorel's capital, Naoi.

(I had made preparations to welcome them in case they suddenly arrived at Naoi, but they entered from Mizuha huh. Raidou has shown reservation in using the promissory note I have given him and has come from the front.) Depending on how Raidou used the promissory note she gave to him, she would allow him to have an audience with the priestess. In Lorel, there's no higher honor than this.

On top of that, she has posted people in the major towns to spread rumors about Raidou being a Wise when they see him.

In other words, no matter where Kuzunoha Company planned to do the negotiation, no matter what Raidou and his companions -Tomoe and Mio- were to do, Sairitz had created a state of affair where no one in this country would be able to act thoughtlessly towards them.

With her influence as the empress, something like a promissory note can be easily issued in the same day.

The reason why she wanted time was because she needed to make preparations to welcome them 'from the shadows'.

(In that case, they probably won't be stepping into Naoi this time around. Considering that going through Kannaoi to Yaso-Katsui is the shortest distance...the effect of it would be...) In reality, inviting Kuzunoha company to Lorel Union is quite the chance for her.

But she already understands plenty well that she can't get impatient.

Limia and Gritonia had called him too, and yet, they didn't form any sort of strengthened relationship.

Even if they were to bring out their all from the country and themselves to entertain Raidou, it would probably end up as the other two.

That was her deduction.

That's why she decided to have the citizens do it instead.

Lorel is the one that best knows how to treat the Wise, and it is not that

difficult to induce others into treating Raidou in that way.

When she investigated personally with the local feudal lords about Kuzunoha company and Raidou, 9 out of 10 deemed him as a Wise.

Sairitz herself was sure that would happen, so this was also a planned result.

On top of that...

(The ghastly mercenary group that's considered a legendary existence, and yet, has low relations with society, Picnic Rose Garden. This is the ideal chance to bring them to the outside. If they come out, I would be able to gauge their fighting strength accurately, and if matters with the Kuzunoha company turn sour, even they wouldn't be able to come out of it unscathed.) Picnic Rose Garden is a mercenary group that the citizens have clear faith in, and are said to have first class fighting prowess.

Sairitz doesn't doubt it.

But even when they possess such a name value, they are not returning allegiance to the country like the Dragon Knights do.

For Sairitz who has strong influence in the domestic affairs of the country, they are not an existence she finds pleasing.

An unknown fighting force that her control can't reach.

They have been docile inside the labyrinth, so she has been leaving them alone, but Sairitz, who has now obtained the card called Raidou, has decided to put her hands on them and test him while at it.

And there's one other thing.

(Kannaoui's malignant tumor, Osakabe. Their confrontation with the Ikusabe has dragged other families into it, and I would want them to turn into a family that's distinguished around this parts only for its name as an old household. Because you know, the ones that's the easiest to utilize is the Ikusabe household after all.) Putting it bluntly, the relationship between Naoi and Kannaoui is bad.

It is not like this is a result that Sairitz fanned.

In her view, the center of politics lies in Naoi, and the history and traditions lie in Kannaoui.

She considers it okay to have those two divided in that way.

For her, things like which is the center of the country, isn't that big of a problem, and there's no need to establish those things.

But the confrontation that the Ikusabe household, who has gained power in Naoi with time, and the Osakabe household that has maintained their power with their connection to the labyrinth; that stupid problem has created sparks here and there, and worsening with time.

For anyone that stands in the political stage, this is a problem that troubled many.

(Osakabe has protected the country from the labyrinth, and by exploring the labyrinth deeply, they have discovered power and riches. Then...if I have the newcomer Raidou easily make contact with the legends at the 20th floor underground...) Several possibilities surfaced in the mind of Sairitz.

(This occasion, it seems like he has his followers that will serve as stoppers, but...it probably won't turn into that bad of a situation. If the worst happens, as long as there's an opening for us, we will also be moving to provide assistance. We can also show a cooperative stance as the employer house of Ikusabe. At present, the only miscalculation that has occurred is that Izumo Ikusabe, at most. Three people from the Ikusabe household were sent to Rotsgard, but to think that the most promising one had gotten involved with Raidou. No matter how great of a person he has been raised into, if we were to harm the mood of Raidou, it wouldn't be worth it. The ability of the other two is not comparable, but I will have to begin thinking about how to use the remaining two huh.) The Ikusabe household had sent three people to Rotsgard in order to have them expand their views and increase their competency.

Within that group, Sairitz had placed Izumo as number one.

She has been in contact with the three of them equally, and hasn't

shown any signs of preferential treatment to any of them.

And that continued even when she learned that Izumo had coincidentally taken the class of Raidou. Even if she were to call him back right this instant and used him as a subordinate under her direct control, there's no doubt that he has the ability to become her number one pawn.

She secretly had an eye on Izumo.

(My plan was to have the Ikusabe eat the weakened Osakabe, make a new grand household, and have Izumo as the head of that family though. The name would be something like Okusobe...the euphony isn't that good though. When that time comes, it would be a good idea to have a priest give it a name.) Sairitz had already reached the last stage of her plan and had a few candidates for Izumo's betrothal.

There's also a princess that has nothing to do with her plans, but within those candidates, there's an influential princess of the Osakabe slipped in it.

For the male side and female side, it would be quite difficult to reject a marriage proposal that had the famous empress Sairitz as the referral.

In other words, it was basically as if Izumo already had wives settled for him.

(There might be unexpected points with Izumo, but...even so, depending on how I involve myself in this occasion, there shouldn't be any losses for Kuzunoha company, Raidou, or me. The only painful part is that it is unknown how much of the good points they will touch though.) Sairitz lightly shrugs.

She was tense because she has invited a dangerous medicine to her country, but her face was mostly filled with joy.

While secretly holding a number of schemes, the strange first visit of Raidou, who has gone to seek the mercenary group underground, has lifted its curtain.

Chapter 242: Acting separately is a basic course of action

Northwest of Lorel.

The whole place is filled with mountain ranges, and not many humans enter that area.

Aside from a few settlements where demi-humans live a self-sufficient life, there's many volcanoes and deep ravines in this area.

It is included in the territory of Lorel Union, but it is one of the locations that they have been unable to develop.

"Isn't that Beren! Long time no see. Has it been around 30 years now?"

"I was feeling nostalgic, so I dropped by. This place...hasn't changed much since the last time I came here." (Beren)

At a certain volcano within that area, there was someone that had arrived there.

A short stature, yet, fleshed out with muscle, and a long beard that grew from below his chin.

An ancient dwarf race, the Elder Dwarf Beren.

He visited a dwarf village he had visited in the past.

"What would change in just a few decades? It is the same, this mountain, and us as well. I don't know how it looks to you who has been from journey to journey though."

"Seems that way. That's why it is nostalgic huh." (Beren)

Beren looked at the scenery that had practically not changed from what he remembers in his memories.

For the dwarfs, whether it be the elders, they are a race that considers decades as a short time.

And yet, this familiar visitor said that this place is nostalgic.

The dwarf that had come to greet Beren had a puzzled expression.

“...You, did something happen? Speak, I will listen.”

“Rather than words, there’s something that’s easier for us to understand, right? Catch.” (Beren)

“Oi, don’t just suddenly–this...is?!!”

What Beren threw was something that was wrapped in cloth.

It was too big for it to be alcohol.

The man that had received it, unwrapped the cloth and checks what it is.

It was a small axe that was around 1 meter in size counting both the handle and the head.

As he checked, he saw that the name of Beren carved in it.

The craftsmanship in his name was slightly reserved which could be said to be a design that fits Beren.

There’s no doubt it was Beren’s creation.

But the reason why the man was surprised was because of the quality of the axe itself.

“It is one of the things I recently made.” (Beren)

“Unbelievable. Yeah, it is unbelievable, but...I can certainly see peculiarities of yours in this. Something as overwhelming as this...was made by you? Impressive. It is truly impressive. But since when...”

“I had what you would call ‘a fateful encounter’. I want to have a talk with the village chief. Talk about the time when I left here, about the place where I had settled down afterwards, and also...about the encounter I told you a moment ago.” (Beren)

“O-Okay! Well, come with me. Seriously, the first time you came here was sudden, but your return was also so sudden. Moreover, you have appeared as a smith that can make such outrageous creations! I will have you tell me in detail, got it?!”

The man cheerfully and enjoyably guided Beren.

Looking at his back, Beren followed him from behind.

(Well, it is truly an unchanging place. If it were my past self of a few years ago, I would have seen it as normal though. Even I can't believe it myself. Attacked by a spider, meeting Tomoe-sama and Waka-sama; it has only been a few years since then. Can barely be called a few years.)

Those were years that he could clearly tell that his ability was increasing everyday.

Moreover, it continues onto the present day.

The knowledge he has gained by interacting with the many races, Tomoe, Mio, and Shiki. Also, on top of that, the many unknown techniques that their ruler, Makoto, has brought about.

For Beren and for the Eldwas, this is a time for them to absorb everything as they continue their trial and error, and grow with all their ability.

Of course, within their living in Asora, they will one day hit a wall, and once they do, there will be a lot of things that will occupy their minds one after the other.

But that's a thing of the future.

The amount of experience that has been piling up steadily is truly turning into something. This kind of happiness is currently being savored by the dwarfs of Asora.

There's nothing as great as this for a craftsmen race.

(It is not only armour. There's also ceramics, and miniaturized heavy equipment. I wonder what kind of face they will make when I show them those. And what they will wish. Waka-sama has repeatedly asked me not to do invitations that will chip off the national power of Lorel, but...only a small amount of dwarfs get involved with humans, so it should be fine to invite the ones that are not involved with them.)

If they are capable craftsmen, Beren intended to invite them to Asora.

At present, less than half of the dwarves are cooperating with the Lorel

Union and the humans.

The dwarf race that surpasses the humans in knowledge and technique as craftsmen, have not received that much discrimination from the humans and are one of the demi-humans that are able to coexist with them. Because of the need to collect raw materials, dwarfs normally make villages in remote places.

For the dwarfs that live in precipitous mountain ranges, it isn't that strange that they lack interaction with other races to begin with.

(Focusing on that, Tomoe-sama said that at first it was best to do this separately. Enter the country separately, and after gathering information, we rendezvous at the lodging. She said that was the ironclad rule or something like that, but...there's probably some sort of deep meaning in it. She said that it was okay to act alone without the need to bring the Forest Onis, so at this moment, I should act as the representative of the Elder Dwarfs!)

Beren had been ordered to act separately by Tomoe, and instead of entering the country from the east entrance like Makoto and the others did, he entered by crossing the mountains.

Of course, it wasn't an entrance that was permitted.

Or more like, the north and western side of Lorel Union was separated by mountain ranges that work as a natural shield, so there's not really anything standing as a national border security.

Aside from having a Dragon Knight unit patrol the area, it is practically in a state where you can enter and leave as much as you want.

However, that's only applicable with the condition that you can cross over the mountain range, are able to be self-sufficient for several days, and on top of that, you are able to fight continuously against all the mamonos as you do this.

The Dragon Knight unit also possesses pretty high reconnaissance ability, so it isn't really that much of a reliable method to enter the country.

“We are here. Welcome back, Beren! Take your time!”

Beren, who had crossed the precipitous mountains alone and arrived at the volcano he was aiming for, didn't show much exhaustion as he entered the dwarf village.

Maybe because Beren felt comfortable with the sounds of smithing and the presence of fire, his mouth had turned into a smile.

“It seems like you are also doing well, village chief.” (Beren)

The smithing sounds could be heard from various places.

It seems like Beren picked one of the peculiarities from within those sounds, he made a wry smile.

In the Elder Dwarf village that he had settled in, the chief there was also devoted to smithing.

It might be the nature of Dwarfs to get more motivated as they grow older. That's how Beren thought.

And he himself will climb higher as a smith.

His wry smile was half directed at himself.

“By the way Beren, that's quite the big baggage you have there. You must have alcohol there too, right? The Earth Spirits were making a big ruckus saying that someone they have never seen before was coming, but to think it was going to be a dwarf carrying baggage.”

“Of course. Leaving aside the amount, you can look forward to its quality.” (Beren)

(It can only be found in Asora after all.)

Beren carried luggage that surpassed his body weight by several times. Seeing it from afar, it would look as if the luggage was walking.

Receiving the report that something unknown was heading to the village, the warriors of the village had armed themselves and stood out, but they saw that it was their old friend Beren waving his hand.

“I am looking forward to it! This axe is plenty enough for a present, and

yet, you are making me have even higher expectations!"

"The name of that creation is: 'Mountain Cutter'. In time, I will master it and show it to you." (Beren)

"Mountain Cutter huh. You have learned the Wise writing huh. Can't underestimate you."

"I see it habitually, so I simply got used to it. I am bad at using my head as always, you know." (Beren)

"I'm relieved to hear that. Now then, I will let you meet that hardheaded geezer—I mean, the village chief. Just stay there, okay? When you are done talking with him, I will have returned from telling the others. At that time, let me hear your story!"

"Thanks. Later then." (Beren)

Beren and the man that was guiding him entered the imposing workshop.

In the past when Beren had entered this place to give his greetings, he was nervous and withered, but now, for some mysterious reason, he was calm.

With a smile, Beren met with the village chief that had turned around.



At that night when Beren had made his revisit, there was a banquet – even if modest– at the dwarf village located halfway up the volcano.

However, the center of it which is Beren was nowhere to be found, along with the village chief.

The reason was because of the many goods Beren displayed to the village chief at their meeting.

"To think that you had gone all the way to the wasteland and settled there."

"It was a result of drifting and drifting about. After leaving here, I added up journeys and settled down in a town called Tsige. After that, I tried

going to the wasteland. Rather than calling it smith training, it was more like searching for the many weapons that were sleeping within that land.” (Beren)

“Umu, there’s people that gather treasures from distant lands, and it is also the gravestone of the strong adventurers. So there’s probably many weapons sleeping there.”

“Yes. And then, after continuing deeper and deeper, I found an Elder Dwarf village and...” (Beren)

“And that’s when you noticed the blood relation within yourself huh. It is true that I felt like you were from a different lineage, but to think that you were actually an Elder Dwarf. Even I am surprised.”

“I was too.” (Beren)

The two of them were in a separate room and drinking alcohol with a lamp as their light and talking about peaceful topics.

There’s no lively drinking like the one at the feasts where they lift the cask and drink from it.

“On top of that, you encountered that black spider alone and managed to return alive. You are the hero of the dwarfs.”

“Well, if I had to choose, I would say I was the princess there. The princess that was saved. If Tomoe-sama and Waka-sama were not there, I would have been devoured, no doubt.” (Beren)

“...That’s it. That’s what I have been bothered with.”

“What is it?” (Beren)

“That Waka-sama. From what I have heard of you, he is without doubt a Wise-sama. Moreover, a very special one. Surpassing the impossible, and bending common sense. He is exactly that archetype.”

“The person himself says he is not though. But the reality might be that it really is the case.” (Beren)

“There’s no talk about the Wise aside from the territory of Lorel after all. In short, it is how they are called, and just as it states, it is not that they are

intelligent people. If I had to put it in words, it would be people that 'know about unusual stuff'. Also, one of the traits of the Wise-samas is that they don't really like when you call them in a way too respectful manner."

The words of the village chief made Beren smile wryly.

It is certainly true that the traits of the Wise that has been passed down in Lorel match Makoto.

It is not like he is a wise man, but at times, he would know some specialized techniques.

Even though he doesn't know the basics of living, architecture, and smithing, he would at times speak about advanced techniques that would develop them further.

It is true that his master Makoto is that kind of mysterious existence.

'Knows of unusual things', Beren thought that it was a pretty accurate way of putting it.

"There were some containers made of earth in the things that you brought. You said that was ceramics, right?"

"Yes."

"Actually, it seems like in the long past, there was something like that too in our village."

"What!" (Beren)

"Its name was exactly the same, ceramic. Or was it pottery? Oh well, anyways, I was told that it this was also knowledge brought by one of the Wise-sama."

"But the first time I came here, there was no such thing." (Beren)

"By that time, it couldn't be used anymore. In the olden days, there was a time when the ground repeatedly trembled and the flow of the river changed heavily. Most of the craftsmen that had devoted to ceramics had died, and as a result, the technique itself turned fuzzy...and in time, it was lost."

“I didn’t know...” (Beren)

“It was something from a long past after all. It was at a time when Lorel didn’t exist yet. The word Wise didn’t exist either.”

“That long... Then how did you know he was a Wise? Just because of that new technique?” (Beren)

“It was a deduction from the fact that he used the writing of the Wise and...because that person had a truly short lifespan. There’s probably no mistake.”

“Short lifespan... About how much?” (Beren)

This was something Beren was heavily interested.

Makoto is also a Wise, an otherworlder.

Meaning, their lifespan should be almost the same.

Right now he can’t even imagine him dying, but there’s no doubt he has a lifespan.

“Since coming to the village, it took a mere 80 years. The records of it are unclear, but it seems like that person died without even reaching the hundred years. Like a human.”

“...Right.” (Beren)

The face of Beren grew clouded.

It is way too short.

Cold despair was gathering deep in his stomach.

“He was the only Wise-sama that has lived in our village, but...even so, he left a lot of things behind. I can understand the sentiment of Lorel to protect them. That’s most likely the correct action to take.”

“As a result, the Wise can also protect them, and their livelihood will be stabilized. It is a good relationship.” (Beren)

“...It is not only about loss and gains. You are also with someone like that, so you should understand, right? The Wise-samas repay good will to their best, and repudiate bad actions. It seems like there were some who

have taken arms and some that walked the path of darkness, but the majority were of calm temperament. They are way too kind. That's why they are highly esteemed, not only by the humans, but also by demi-humans, and obviously, us as well."

"Way too kind, huh." (Beren)

"I have heard that even in war, even if they were faced with an enemy, they would forgive them as best as they can, save their life, and provided them a chance to redo their lives."

"...I see. A kindness that you have to protect or it will die out huh. Like a lovely flower." (Beren)

Then...it probably doesn't apply to Makoto, is what Beren thought.

It is true that the ruler of Asora, Makoto, is kind, and he is also a good person. However, his power is so overwhelming to the point that even a Superior Dragon and the Calamity Spider obey him.

He is definitely not a flower that one can simply pluck out.

"They are not flowers that can be easily plucked out though. The Wise-samas are all stronger than the average. They have an overwhelming latent talent that at times, our weapons can't reach."

"Lately, I have heard that the heroes are pretty Wise-like though."
(Beren)

"Yeah, it seems so. I heard that the Limia hero who had visited this country, had revealed herself to the Empress as an otherworlder. She is accompanied by the priestess, so it must be true."

"So you already knew." (Beren)

"We have connections with the other dwarf villages, you see. The Wise-sama that was in this village, by the time his hair had gone white, he was strong to a point that he was able to match a dragon with the dragon slaying sword, Einkarf. The heroes must be relatively strong too."

"I see. But to do dragon slaying at an old age, this village's Wise was also an unbelievable person." (Beren)

“It is not assured that the records are all true, but it seems like he was 96 at that time. In terms of human lifespan, that would mean he defeated a dragon while he was at death’s door. At the time when the village got attacked by flying dragons, he brought out his weapon and fought along with the warriors of the village.”

“ ... ”

Makoto might have done the same thing, is what Beren thought.

If something were to happen in Asora, he would also risk his life.

For some reason, Beren was able to believe this without any doubt.

Makoto probably wouldn’t admit it, but this can be considered the highest type of trust that the residents have towards their lord.

“...And then, until the very end, he soared through the skies and hunted down all the dragons...and after that, died.”

“An heroic story. And he was able to bring out such righteousness even towards a race he was not related with. It is the story of a man that should be sung praises for.” (Beren)

“Even if it was slightly exaggerated, it is impressive, right? After doing as much as that, we also have to repay him. That’s why a number of his words have remained in this village, and still live. This ceramic technique was lost though... But in the first place, even within the dwarfs, we are the type that likes the back regions, a family of eccentrics that have devoted themselves to their lives as blacksmiths. This isn’t something I should be saying myself but, we were stubborn and...kind of shut-ins. In the past, our stance was to turn away outsiders.”

“But, even if I am a brethren, I remember that I was received pretty warmly when I came here.” (Beren)

“Listen till the end. That’s exactly one of the things that changed with his words. When he taught us the technique to knead earth, he brought out a number of examples and left warnings and aphorisms. Within the words that have remained of him, there’s something called foreign soil guests.”

“Foreign soil?” (Beren)

“Umu. From the meaning that remained in the village, it implies that the earth of another land brought by the stream is something that enriches this land and brings about change.”

“I see. Carried earth huh. Change... fumu.” (Beren)

“With that as the turning point, we began seeing the outsiders as foreign soil, and didn’t chase them away just because they are from the outside. Accept them, help each other out, change, and mutually ripening. That’s what he said.”

“That’s why you saw me as foreign soil as well and accepted me.”
(Beren)

“I just wanted to say that this trait had remained in the village. Also, Beren, you have...brought us this. Ceramics.”

“It wasn’t a repayment with knowledge of your circumstances though. It is embarrassing to say this, but it was 100% a coincidence.” (Beren)

“It is fine. That in itself is the very soil of his teachings. You have trained into being able to make this level of weapons, learned of ceramics, and has brought this heavy equipment device. All of this is the ripening of our past encounter. I didn’t know I would be able to experience such a happy sensation before I die.”

“Village chief...” (Beren)

The grateful eyes of this old man that is strict and merciless, was, for some reason, unpleasant for Beren.

He was being directed pure gratitude by the village chief.

In his time when he was training, he was punched, kicked, and had his beard and hair burned by the village chief. To think that fiend is the same person as this, he couldn’t believe it at all.

“Let’s hear your conditions, Beren. Not as a past apprentice of mine, but as the envoy of the master you are currently serving for, Makoto-sama. Begin your talk once again. Bringing this many goods here, I don’t think

you have crossed the northern mountain range with that heavy baggage just to show them to me.”

“...Thanks.” (Beren)

The old man that was his teacher in the past, has declared that he will be treating Beren as a person of the same standing.

Beren displays equipment for Makoto, Tomoe, and the others in Asora, but he could feel a different kind of happiness than that of being acknowledged by them.

Northern part of Lorel, Beren had begun mobilizing.

Chapter 243: After Rinon

The power of the promissory note Sairitz-san gave me was ridiculous.

For a second, I thought about hanging it on my neck and walk around with it. That way, trouble might avoid me.

But if I do that, something even more troublesome than this promissory note will definitely happen.

Like kicking a pebble on the street and breaking a national treasure accidentally.

Parallel worlds are troublesome because things that happen in gag mangas can easily happen in real life.

“Hohoh~ this is a room that I can actually relax in. We are lucky a good inn was open.” (Tomoe) “It is definitely better than the log house we were in before. The owner didn’t try to overcharge us either.” (Mio) We decided to stay a night in Mizuha, so we began to do things like sightseeing the townscape and tasting the specialties as we looked for an inn.

Narrowing the conditions into: a good atmosphere, cost, and delicious food, as we looked around, is one of the best parts about a journey.

...Well, in the modern world, I could simply search for all of that in the internet though.

I thought we would be doing something similar to when Shiki and I headed to the Academy, but it didn’t turn out that way.

Tomoe casually grabbed the soldiers that were stealthily tailing us and said: “Where is the best inn here?”

With this, it was decided.

About that inn, Mio also said her piece of mind.

“Prepare your best room.”

Yup, that’s all.

Of course it would be a good room if you say that.

With that, it is obviously going to be open.

We went to an expensive inn, and on top of that, we asked for the most expensive room there.

It would be one thing if we had come in a special day for this city, but in this time that's practically off-season, it will most likely be open.

By the way, the soldiers that had been dazzled by the promissory note were at our backs, so the inn owner was probably troubled...

Sorry for that.

"Fumu fumu. As expected of a foreign country. Their style is pretty different. This is that, right? A ryokan . It has taken that as a reference, right Waka?" (Tomoe) "The corridor had wooden floors, but there's even tatamis in the room. It doesn't seem to be exactly the same, but...there's no doubt that they used that as reference." (Makoto) It may be slightly reddish-brown, but the looks are exactly like a tatami.

Is it because the materials that can be obtained here are of this color, or because this is their limit as to how close they can be of the tatami color? I don't know.

The smell is also similar, but different.

However, I am simply comparing it with the tatamis I know of, and there's no doubt that in Lorel, this is serving its purpose as tatamis.

The composition of the room is exactly that of a Japanese-style room.

...As I thought, within the Japanese Wise in Lorel that missed their world, there were some that tried to replicate how it was.

In this country that has a good relationship with the dwarfs, they could have used many better materials like stones and bricks, and yet, most of the houses are wooden.

I even found red bean paste that had the same color and taste. But it didn't have sticky rice cake inside, it seems to be mainly consumed as cake.

It seems like depending on the area, there are places that actually use

sticky rice cake inside.

Also, there were some that were inside bread.

Red bean paste bread.

It had exactly the same taste and I felt incredibly nostalgic.

As an otherworlder, the thing that one pursues the most is probably the taste of your homeland.

Or do they simply acknowledge it as something delicious?

At this rate, I might be able to find soy sauce or miso around here.

It might be a good idea to check out the marks...no, the footprints that the Japanese, who spend their whole life in this country, have left.

If the situation in Tsige has a sudden turn, I would have to return immediately, but once the negotiation with the mercenary group is done, maybe for a little while...

“Oh?!”

“Ara!”

?

As I was pensive, Tomoe and Mio, who were looking around the room, raised their voices.

“You two, what happened?” (Makoto)

“No well, this is a joyful unexpected event. We have found something wonderful.” (Tomoe) “It has been a while-desu wa ne. Ufufufufu.” (Mio)

“Let’s see... T-This is?!” (Makoto)

As expected of the best room in the city’s number one inn.

At a section of the room, at the other side of the wooden door...there was something nostalgic, and something that I have a recollection of in this world.

“To think there’s an open air bath here, how stylish.” (Makoto) “Since the time we entered together, I haven’t had a chance to wash your back,

but it seems like tonight I will be able to take care of you leisurely-desu wa.” (Mio) Oh, seriously?

Since the time I showed an unsightly side of me in the Kaleneon mountain, I have been stealthily avoiding mixed baths, and yet, this is...

There’s a limit to sudden trouble.

A stone bath that is compact yet neatly put together. A bath that looks like it has been created with a resemblance to the cypress bath.

It is being poured water even now, and steam is coming out from it.

I remember seeing in tv that there are this kind of rooms in expensive inns, but...to think that I would be able to experience it myself.

Moreover, with two women.

...What a situation.

‘Hahaha, explode’, for some reason, I felt like this is the kind of situation where someone would shout this mortified as they point their finger, and I don’t know why, but mysteriously, I felt like that finger was pointed at me.

“Look for a restaurant to eat in, check out the city’s surroundings, and then at the end, cleanse the fatigue in the hot spring! This is the best first day.” (Tomoe) “If the end is the best, I don’t care about the other parts being no good.” (Mio) “...This time I won’t get dizzy. I am going to be careful. You two as well, please restrain yourselves.” (Makoto) “Don’t worry about what happened last time! Don’t worry, first time’s are always like that. In other words, it is all about getting used to it.” (Tomoe) “Also, even if it ends up that way again, I will nurse you. Please enjoy the bath without worrying.” (Mio) ...They don’t have a single bit of intentions to restrain.

I can clearly tell that they didn’t listen to the latter half of my words.

So they pretend not to hear the words that are not convenient for them huh. Even though I asked them kindly and all.

At the time in Zenno when I was with both of them...right, at the place we went, we picked up the sister of Toa, Rinon. After that, we faced a

variety of things like attacks.

Ah, I see.

I just have to pick up someone this time as well, like the time with Rinon.

Please, let there be someone who is troubled.



“Is it that one?” (Tomoe)

“What is it, Tomoe-san?” (Makoto)

I respond in that way to the amazed mutter of Tomoe.

“Find an inn, go out for the meal. For Waka, these two are supposed to be flags for you to make something happen, right?” (Tomoe) “What do you take me for? Rather than me making something happen, it is more like, things occur. No matter what it is, it is not like I am the one that did it.” (Makoto) I was indeed wishing for it though.

“Waka-sama, Waka-sama.” (Mio)

Mio whispers in my ear.

“What, Mio?” (Makoto)

“Why don’t we just pretend we didn’t see this at all? If we just stealthily move at the sides of the street, someone else will definitely do something about it.” (Mio) “It is rare to see our thoughts match, Mio. Waka, I think that this time, this is a good choice to take. How about it?” (Tomoe) “... You two...just how fast do you want to return?” (Makoto)

““As soon as possible!””

They synced extraordinarily well.

After finishing our dinner of nabe prepared with miso that seems to be the specialty of this place, we were going back to the inn as we voiced out our impressions, saying things like: ‘it was delicious’.

It seems like Mizuha has pretty good public order. At night, there were a good amount of people on the streets, but once we moved to the next thin

street, it still ended up giving a dangerous vibe.

Tomoe and Mio seemed like they wanted to return to the inn fast, so they clearly chose the shortest route as they moved.

It wasn't me, you know?

Tomoe and Mio were the ones who wanted to go that way, okay?

And then, we immediately got an encounter.

Hahahaha.

At that location, there was a kid with what seemed to be a toy sword, confronting a number of adults.

The sword that the kid was holding, gave out the light of magic power.

I don't know how much effectiveness it provides, but I don't think it is a good idea to give out your location in the darkness.

Because that definitely doesn't work for your advantage.

"If this were a fight between drunks, it would be a different story, but just from looking at it, you can tell that it is giving out the scent of crime, right?" (Makoto) "Actually, it smells like nothing but trouble though. Ah, why didn't I endure the few extra minutes in the safe path...?" (Tomoe) "Now that I look closely, that kid might be an elf, or maybe not? Hah...it is true that the open air bath wouldn't have run away anyways. It must be that, right? The impatient beggars don't get much change, was it?" (Mio) "Something like that. However, the other side is also taking their sweet time. Now then..." (Tomoe) These two don't have any motivation at all.

Mio is already so despondent that I can't even understand what she is saying.

Tomoe is also giving out an aura of 'what a pain' from all her body.

But I will save that kid.

Actually, that kid there, please save me, in a lot of meanings.

But it is certainly true. Just like Tomoe said, the attackers are taking their sweet time.

It doesn't seem like they have noticed us either.

"Princess-sama, please return! If you have something in your mind, you can just order us and we will soon—"

"Zip your mouths, zip your mouths! I will go myself and supervise the land-desu! I will also bring out my own money to hire people-desu! You don't have to worry-desu!"

She is a girl that says -desu repeatedly and zip your mouths.

Even so...is she saying supervise, or check?

If it were the latter, it would be one thing, but the former is not something that a child can do.

Also...princess-sama?

I thought she was a broke kid like Rinon. But it seems like the situation is a bit...no, a lot different.

"If something were to happen to Princess-sama, I, Shougetsu, wouldn't know what to say to Danna-sama" (Shougetsu) "If it is father, you can just give him his favorite steamed buns and he won't care about someone like me-desu!!!"

"...That's saying too much! Princess-sama!" (Shougetsu)

...I retract my words.

Now that I look properly, the adult side is mixed with men and women.

There are indeed some that have their swords unsheathed, but they are making sure not to point the edged part towards the kid.

And the child was swinging around the magic powered sword, but the adults were restraining themselves.

Yeah, this is the type of trouble I don't want to get involved with.

"..."

"It seems like the dangerous scent is gone, so let's just consider it as watching an amusing show and leave now." (Makoto) My instincts were telling me that it would be better to get caught in the mixed bath rather

than this.

“ ... ”

However, the silent Tomoe was different from Mio who wanted to return as soon as possible. She wasn't moving from the place.

Or more like...she had a complacent smile.

Ah, she read their memories.

“In any case, even if you swing around something like that, we can't step back! Akashi, Yudoku, we are bringing back the princess even if by force. Don't injure her!” (Shougetsu) “As you will!”

“Got it!”

Those two are like Tomoe and Mio.

Akashi and Yudoku; the two women run towards the kid.

It seems like even if they are going to incapacitate her, they are not going to injure her, so it clearly doesn't seem to be a crime.

Ignore it. Ignoring is the best.

“Stop right there, scoundrels!”

Hah?!

Uo, Tomoe is not here!

Once I look at my side, Tomoe was not there anymore.

Just now, they said something about Kannaoui, the place where we will most likely be staying the longest time in this country, so it would have been better if we had just ignored it.

“Gah?!”

“Gufu!”

Noooo!

Akashi-san and Yudoku-san have fallen right before the kid!

That's To.mo.e!!!!

A tender warmth reaches my legs.

How to say it, it is just as expected.

In front of the absent-minded princess that's holding the glowing sword, Tomoe appears with one of her two katanas unsheathed, the long one.

Until I pointed it out, Tomoe had been using the short lengthed one, Shirafuji, pretty often.

But after explaining her the meaning of the short one, she has begun unsheathing the long one, Yae Kuro Ryu , more often.

Well, she can manage most people with her bare hands, so she rarely unsheathes it though.

And yet, she went through the trouble of unsheathing it this time around.

It seems like that katana was made by the dwarfs out of some sort of mysterious tree that was able to face a mountain fire head on.

Wood that is harder than metal, and it is so tempered that it wouldn't lose to a mountain fire. I didn't understand a thing about that material.

Whatever the case, it is a fire element katana that is opposite to Shirafuji.

"Doing something like surrounding a small child with numbers, is that something adults do?! Learn shame!" (Tomoe) ...You were listening to the situation, and yet, those are quite the words.

"Are you okay, little child? It is alright now-ja. I will protect you."
(Tomoe) "Wait wait wait! We have our circumstances. We can't reveal the details, but we do have our circumstances! By no means did we intend to injure that personage." (Shougetsu) "There's no need to hear the words of people that have taken their weapons and threatened a kid with numbers!" (Tomoe) ...That man named Shougetsu-san, was he born under a star that doesn't let him finish what he wants to say?

So saddening.

Ah, no good.

I feel like rolling my eyes.

The katana of Tomoe makes a flash.

The heat wave that was produced by this had blown Shougetsu-san and the others till the building at their back.

It was so sudden that they couldn't scream once.

Ah, so she narrowly managed to not dye her hands in evil huh.

Because if she wanted to, she would be able to turn everything into ashes all the way to the inn we are staying.

It seems like she didn't go that far.

"Are you hurt?" (Tomoe)

"..."

"Now then, little child, let's find a safe place to—" (Tomoe) "Amazing... Amazing-desu! You were like the legendary master swordsman, Iori-na no desu!!"

"Oh, master swordsman. What a nice sounding title-ja no." (Tomoe)

"Ah, but the old ma—No no! I mean, those hoodlums there, are they okay?"

"Of course. I used the blunt side-ja." (Tomoe)

"Uwaa~~~!"

Uwaaa, she made an 'uwaa' that was not from drawing back, but one that was from admiration.

Even from here, I could tell that the kid's eyes were glittering.

But Tomoe, I think crashing onto a hard surface and getting burns are quite the big deal though. Is it okay to call that 'blunt side'?

Akashi-san and Yuduki-san look like they are pretty injured, you know?

...Well, we are talking about Tomoe here.

She would simply say that the blunt side is used for when she fights outside.

Swinging her sword and calling it 'blunt side' sounds quite war-like

though.

Well, they are alive, so she definitely did hold back there.

“Waka-sama...” (Mio)

“Right, let’s return to the inn.” (Makoto)

Mio tugged my clothes.

Reading those eyes of hers that were as if appealing to something, I answer her.

We will probably be going back with that kid though.

“That’s great. I thought we wouldn’t be able to bath. Wash his back~~ Wash his back~~♪” (Mio) ...Eh?

Weren’t those eyes saying that you wanted to go back because it was getting cold?

Chapter 244: Blindfolds are for fashion

“What’s with that appearance you have there, little girl?”

We did a light self-introduction with the princess-sama that we brought back.

Tomoe explained to her that we are a company from a foreign country who has gotten the permission from Lorel Union to do some business inside the country, which is all true but doesn’t touch anything about our real objective. And after that, we confirmed our standings.

Since then, there hasn’t been a single word about Yaso-Katsui or Kannaoui.

We simply told her that Sairitz-san has given us her approval by telling us that she would cooperate with her best if we were to make a store inside the country, and that we have obtained information from her and are currently in the country with the objective of heading to the labyrinth.

...Words have a lot of depth huh.

The princess-sama said that she is the daughter of a relatively big town’s landlord, and her name is Ousaka Iroha. Because of Tomoe’s first impression, she is pretty attached to her.

Iroha is probably her real name, but her family name is probably not Ousaka but Osakabe.

The person herself said: ‘Osaka– Ousaka’, and restated it after all.

However, different from other countries, the names given to the people in Lorel are not names that define their nature, their nature is what defines their name. A name like Iroha-chan finally clicked in my mind.

Their naming sense is Japanese-like, so I was finally able to confirm that the Wise-sama in this country are definitely Japanese. I have also understood that this country has been influenced in a slightly strange manner.

The legendary master swordsman Iori is also a totally Japanese-style

name after all.

When I asked, I was told that this person was from such a long past that it is even questionable if he actually existed, but in this country, it is a pretty well known fairytale, or more like, the main protagonist of a hero tale.

I do think the person existed, and there's the chance he was the husband of Root.

There's also the chance that he was a Japanese person.

It seems like he is loved, so well, if he really is Japanese, that in itself is something that makes me kind of proud.

And it seems like Iroha-chan is a big fan of Muramatsu Iori.

Yeah, how charming.

But at any rate, the attire this girl has which you can tell by a glance that it is expensive, her speech and conduct that you can tell she is ignorant to the outside world, moreover, even if it is the story of a hero which children would seem to like, her knowledge was pretty detailed.

She even retorted about the name of Kuzunoha company, saying that: 'You are named Kuzunoha, and yet, you are a foreign company?'.

The two possibilities point to rich people, but rather than the daughter of a landlord, she looks more like a princess for me.

In other words, she gives me the impression that there's no doubt she is the daughter of the Osakabe household.

I will confirm this with Tomoe later.

It seems like the interest of Iroha-chan finally shifted to something else.

By the way, even when I said that I am the master of Tomoe and am the representative of the company, not only did she hold her stomach in laughter, she was told by Tomoe that it was the truth and got shocked.

Leaving aside how much a kid can understand, we explained it to her, and received the impression: 'how mysterious'.

Those are the details from just a few moments ago.

Right now, the other thing that Iroha-chan is interested in –no, it is not me– that's right, she was interested in the talk about entering the open air bath.

Going to the bath with a girl I met just moments ago.

The development of the situation is so bad that it sounds like a bad eroge, and I can also clearly tell that it will go straight to a Bad End right after.

I am going straight to jail.

I don't know about this world, but ethically speaking, this would put me straight in jail.

No matter if I have the promissory note of Sairitz-san.

But I threw that line of thought immediately into the far horizon, and well, she is a guest that we brought ourselves, so I told Iroha-chan to go take a bath first instead.

It is not a bath that has water filled up, it is a luxurious hot spring that has water constantly flowing in it.

It is obviously smaller than the super bath-house that came out from a big hole at a winter mountain and had its construction rushed, but in the eyes of a plebeian like me, it is an open air bath of pretty big size.

...Now that I think about it, we are staying in a pretty luxurious inn where there's a time limit of a one hour stay and any more than that we have to pay extra charges, and yet, we are able to stay in this kind of room as much as we want.

And we are able to utilize the guest room in the inn without any sort of time limitation.

I...have a lot of money huh.

The gold in the warehouse at Asora gradually increases.

Even if we were to continue building warehouses, the insides wouldn't

change, and more importantly, it doesn't look good for the scenery, so we are trying to exchange the gold coins in Asora's warehouses.

If I remember correctly, there's the magic silver coin and the yellow gold coin (which is also called magic gold coin), so it is possible to exchange it, but leaving aside the fact that there's two that are higher than the gold coin, they are not easy to use.

That's why I didn't want to exchange it much.

But there's a lot of things I want to place inside the warehouses, so it can't be helped.

Frankly speaking, the yellow gold coin is difficult to obtain, and it is half treated as an artistic good. If I had to illustrate it with something in Earth, it would be like an expensive commemoration coin, so I have changed them all into magic silver coins.

I remember that even with that, Shiki said that it would still take the space of several warehouses.

It is impossible to know the exact amount of money we have, and there's no way to have a good grasp of it, but...let's try asking about the amount of money we have in our possession.

Oh right.

At any rate, I offered Iroha-chan to take a bath, but she said that she can't go on her own, so someone should enter with her.

And after that, she slowly went to the front of Mio and lifted both her arms.

She stretched both arms and legs while standing.

Mio had a dubious expression as she asked the reason why to Iroha-chan. Well, that's normal.

I also don't understand what she is aiming for.

But I will tell Mio later to stop calling her little girl.

"You said your name was Mio, right? Quickly take my clothes off-desu."

(Iroha) "...Hah?" (Mio)

"What's with that 'hah'? You are the maid that serves under Tomoe-sama and Raidou-sama, right? It doesn't seem like there's any other servant here, so I will leave you under my care-desu." (Iroha) "Pfft."
(Tomoe)

Tomoe laughed.

The pure words of Iroha-chan held no malice.

I see, what a misunderstanding.

In terms of our standings, the correct answer would be that below me, Tomoe and Mio stand in the same height, but because of the processing of Iroha-chan, even with our explanation, Mio had become the one with the lowest standing among us.

...Ah, I see.

On top of that, she was accompanied by that old man and those people that looked like bodyguards, and it seemed like there were servants too, so she probably thought our relationship was similar to how theirs is.

"...Listen well. I serve Waka-sama! By no means do I serve someone like Tomoe-san. Tomoe-san and I have the same standing. No, I, who has been gradually gaining the favor of Waka-sama's stomach, am standing higher. Do you understand?" (Mio) "If you are the cook, that means your standing is lower than that of Tomoe-sama who is a close aide. In the first place, having katanas and serving her master is the proof that she is a close aide. That's why..." (Iroha) "Do.you.un.der.stand?" (Mio)

"?!!! Iph huphs!! Iph huphs-esu!" (Iroha)

"Are.you.lis.te.ning?" (Mio)

Mio immediately abandons any thoughts of conversation and goes straight to force.

The cheeks of Iroha-chan...that looks painful.

Since the meat has not been teared off, it seems like she properly understands how much strength to use on a child.

Hm, for someone like Mio, this is quite the soft and Mio-like way of dealing with things.

After a while of lifting her up and doing the dance of ‘un.der.stand?’, Iroha-chan tearfully nodded her head up and down.

The convincing was successful.

Or more like, con.vin.cing.

“Uwuuu, if Mio-san is no good, it can’t be helped. Raidou-sama, I ask of you-desu.” (Iroha) Eh?

“What is this little girl saying? Does she have a loose screw?” (Makoto) “Eh?” (Iroha)

Crap, I messed up.

My words and thoughts come out in reverse order.

“Ah no well, I haven’t assisted a girl in her bathing you see. I am sorry but, I can’t.” (Makoto) In a variety of meanings, that is.

I have no such tastes.

It doesn’t excite me at all.

Today is a day where I have experienced a lot of unexpected findings.

Or more like, why is it that when Mio is no good, she asks me rather than Tomoe?

“You litt–lass. Your name was Iroha, right? It seems like my words were not enough.” (Mio) Mio spins both hands and looks at Iroha-chan.

Iroha-chan is definitely not saying this to seduce me, so don’t just turn the little girl into lass and call her by her name, Mio.

It seems like spinning both her hands had great effect on Iroha-chan, she hid behind my back.

“Now now Mio, can’t you see that Iroha is getting scared? From what we have heard, this girl’s family is that of a pretty influential landlord. She grew in an environment where her necessities were all taken care by others. Don’t get so angry.” (Tomoe) “Tomoe-san, are you telling me to let

this girl have Waka-sama take off her clothes, and assist her in her bathing? Have Waka-sama wash her body and hair, and soak in the bath together? Is that what you are saying? I see. Can't let that happen, definitely can't. There's no way I would let something so envious— Anyways, I won't accept it! No way! Because I will be the one who will be doing it later!" (Mio) "Ah, if it's soaking in the bath, I can do it on my own. But taking off my clothes and washing my body and hair, that's the job of the servants that are in the bath-na no desu. It is the same with my mom as well-desu." (Iroha) Oi.

You intended to make me wash your body and hair?

How scary.

The words that Iroha-chan says, steadily increase the level of how much unawareness this girl has, and how she has been raised in her rich family.

That's what they have been doing? Seriously?

Also Mio, I will end up collapsing again if you do that.

Didn't I tell you to restrain yourselves not that long ago?

"When you say it, it sounds strangely erotic, Mio. But don't worry, I wouldn't let Waka do something like that. He hasn't done that for me either after all. I was the first one that thought about bringing her here-ja. And so, how about I help Iroha in her bathing?" (Tomoe) Aside from the funny words Tomoe muttered around the middle, her words were unexpectedly admirable.

There's no way I am going to wash the body of Tomoe who is a lot older and surpasses me in height by much.

Well, let's have Tomoe bath with Iroha-chan then.

The person herself is okay with it, and Mio doesn't want to do it.

"With T-T-Tomoe-sama-desu ka?! Impossible! It is absolutely impossible-na no desu!!" (Iroha) cling

Iroha-chan's face goes bright red and clings onto me.

Firmly.

The expression of Mio went one level up.

I don't understand how that works, but that's how I felt.

But what does this mean, little girl?

If I had to say something about this, isn't your attitude reversed in regards to me and Tomoe?

...Could it be?!

This girl, has she already reached the age where she has perverted sexual preferences?!

Impossible, Lorel.

That is a side of the Japanese that you shouldn't imitate.

?!!!

When I heard about the legendary swordsman Iori, I thought that there was a pupil or an adopted child of Miyamoto Musashi that had a name like that.

I totally thought that this person was a man, but could it be...it was a woman?!

N-Now that I think about it, the bodyguards just now were both women.

In other words...I am correct?

"What's with that reaction-ja? If you are fine with Waka, you should be fine with me as well, right? It seems like you don't have hesitation in showing your skin at bath after all." (Tomoe) "T-T-T-That's not the problem here!" (Iroha)

How could it be.

People of Lorel Union, I don't know which Japanese did these, but I am truly sorry.

The solution of this has not yet been found even with state-of-the-art techniques in the modern world.

To forcefully fix this, you would need to do things like brainwashing, and

that doesn't feel like it is a solution.

(Ah, Waka, just saying but, this girl likes boys, you know. It seems like she hasn't met him yet, but she has a fiancée that she herself has accepted.) (Tomoe) Receiving a shocking revelation, I was filled with apologetic feelings towards Lorel. I don't know how Tomoe knew what I was thinking, but she send me a lukewarm thought transmission.

Iroha-chan's speech and conduct are clearly telling me otherwise though.

Is it really the case?

It is Tomoe, so it shouldn't be a mistake, but...you know...

"Fumu, then what's the problem-ja." (Tomoe)

"Ha...ha ha ha." (Iroha)

She looked like a dog with rough breathing.

It seems like she is trying to say the reason, so we just wait.

"It is embarrassing-desu!" (Iroha)

"No well, we will be bathing together anyways, right?" (Tomoe) "Please give up!" (Iroha)

"...Isn't it please give in?" (Makoto)

Ah, I retorted by reflex.

"Aw, please give in!-na no desu."

She is really agitated.

Let just have her say everything she has to say for now.

Don't retort, don't retort.

"Umu." (Tomoe)

Looks like Tomoe is doing that too.

"At least wait until I am 17-18, and get a woman-like body like that of my mom. At that time...I will happily take a bath together. Right now it is no good-na no desu! I can't show you this petite body of mine!! It can't match

Tomoe-sama's incredible body at all!!" (Iroha) ...

I don't know how old this girl is but, is it that? The talk about taking a bath together after several years later.

Even if Mio were to take off Iroha-chan's clothes, it would still end up in them taking a bath together after all.

So should they take baths separately?

But even so, her naked body would still be seen already anyways.

"I don't really care about the naked body of a child. Also, if your goal is to have a body like that of your mother, you will in time look similar to her. Don't mind it. Well, if Iroha says that she definitely doesn't want me to see, then I don't mind going in the bath with a blindfold." (Tomoe) ...I wouldn't like that.

A bath is something more free, willful, and fun.

In my land, it is called a necessary article to cleanse your heart after all.

I am one of the people that say: Bath is life.

But I still haven't mastered the bath road enough to say these words though.

"Something like a blindfold is just...!" (Iroha)

Even Iroha-chan is not so lacking in common sense.

It looks like she understands the importance of bathing.

"Then what should we do? Even if it is slightly embarrassing, it is best to obediently let me wash you, you know. It is my first time cleaning the body of someone else after all. Be proud, I am giving you the honor of being my first." (Tomoe) This Tomoe.

She must have read something in the memories of Iroha-chan and her group.

She seems to be in a pretty good mood, and she is even saying this much, so...it must be quite the thing.

Could it be, this girl has something special?

I feel like that 'special' something is directed at me and not at Tomoe.

"I ask that T-Tomoe-sama goes in first, or that you go in later-desu!"
(Iroha) "...What?" (Tomoe)

"...Pfft." (Mio)

It has curved.

Now Mio is the one who leaks a laugh.

In other words, there were two patterns in the head of Iroha-chan that could be taken after being rejected by Mio and asked me to look after her.

The first is for Mio and Iroha-chan to go together; Tomoe baths alone.

The other one is me going together with Iroha-chan; Tomoe and Mio go in together.

"...In short, Iroha, you are telling me to go in alone?" (Tomoe) "No! I am just saying that you can happily enter together with Mio-san-no desu!"
(Iroha) Maybe she was pushed by the strange vigour of Tomoe, Iroha-chan began speaking formally with her -desus.

-Desus really are unrivalled.

Maybe it is restricted to little girls, but strangely, I feel like forgiving it.

But it seems like I am the only one that's forgiving here.

Looks like the other two didn't agree at all with what she said.

Even I could tell that the time for questions and answers was over.

Tomoe and Mio silently nod.

Well, I may not be fit to say it, but I think it is the proper decision.

Don't let the little girl enter alone, and don't let me bath together with a girl that I have just met.

Then tonight, I will restrain from bathing, and have Mio or Tomoe enter the bath with Iroha-chan.

That's the best choice.

"Iroha, if you had just accepted the blindfold, there would have still been

room for negotiation. Now that I think about it, we might have been spoiling you by considering standings.” (Tomoe) Hm?

“The very thought of showing consideration towards this lass was a mistake. Because, from the beginning, this was what we have been looking forward to the most in all the day!” (Mio) Hm? This...

“Hiiih?!” (Iroha)

“There we go.” (Mio)

Iroha-chan was pried away from my thigh by Mio.

It happened in an instant.

“This is a good opportunity-ja. I will teach you how to enter the bath. That’s right, the etiquette of mixed bathing, that is!” (Tomoe) There’s nothing like that!

Of course, there’s no good opportunity for that either!

That’s the first time I have heard of something like this!

“Hey Tomoe, why are you grabbing my back collar?” (Makoto) “Of course, because this is the thing we have been looking forward to the most all day after all! Here we go Waka, prepare yourself!” (Tomoe) “Wait, you!” (Makoto)

“I won’t let you say that today you are not going to bath! We won’t allow that. That’s right, we won’t!” (Tomoe) “You read it! You have read my mind again!” (Makoto)

“Didn’t even need to read it. There’s a limit to how transparent you are!” (Tomoe) I was dragged into the dressing room that’s right before the open air bath.

B-Baths are more about freedom and willfulness. Uuuh.

“And so, Iroha, I will be peeling you off right now, but do you want me to wear a blindfold? Hm?” (Tomoe) “Even if you do something like that, if it us, we would still be able to see if we wanted to anyways so, isn’t that pointless? It seems like this lass is wearing something troublesome to take off, so I will just help her take it off quickly-desu wa.” (Mio) The bath will

end as fast as taking off our clothes, right?

...No wait, you still can see?

What's with that?

Are blindfolds only fashion for you guys?

“Ah, Mio! You idiot! If you didn't say anything, we could have just told Waka that we would be wearing blindfolds, and we would have been able to wash him twice or thrice, you know!!” (Tomoe) “?!!! What?!! What's with that reward?! Blindfold, where is the blindfold?! Ah, there's none! Wait for a bit, I will borrow one from the Gorgons!” (Mio) “...No well, I have already heard it. Or more like, I thought it was only to the extent that you are able to tell by the presence, but you two are actually able to see huh. I don't know if this information will be useful, but...I will keep it in mind.” (Makoto) “You have crushed one important card. Later, I will tell you a number of secret plans I have thought over carefully, so use them as reference, you idiot.” (Tomoe) “But you know, I didn't think we would get the permission by doing something like that...Uuuuh, sorry.” (Mio) Mio honestly apologizes to Tomoe.

Such a precious scene.

“Uhm, I-If it is only one day, I can endure not bathing.” (Iroha) “Is that so?” (Tomoe)

“Yes!” (Iroha)

Tomoe was undressing as she grins at the smiling Iroha.

“Too bad, you are out of time-ja. You are 30 minutes too late. Now then, I will give you three seconds. Who do you want to be peeled by?” (Tomoe) H-How harsh.

Even if Iroha-chan wanted to escape, she is currently being lifted up by Tomoe.

It is impossible to escape.

“Three...” (Tomoe)

“Fuee?! E-Ehm.” (Iroha)

“Two...” (Tomoe)

“Ah, aaah, ehh...” (Iroha)

“O~ne...” (Tomoe)

“U-Understood. T-Then!!” (Iroha)

Being forced into an unreasonable choice, Iroha-chan finally...

“Hohoh~” (Tomoe)

Tomoe makes a nice smile.

Well, there's no need to go through the trouble of saying who Iroha-chan has chosen.

Learning more about girl's clothes...is not that big of a deal.

That's right.

There's things in this world...that are best forgotten.

Just one thing. Tonight's events, I will definitely issue a gag order on it.

That's what I have decided.

Chapter 245: The princess of Osakabe

Conclusion.

With a child added to the group, the seductiveness of the bath is blown away.

It seems like a child has far more destructive power than mixed bathing.

Thanks to it, I didn't end up getting dizzy, and was able to safely finish bathing.

...Just that, even if I was only able to maintain a bit more composure, because of it, I ended up seeing a lot more things.

As I thought, they do float.

Yeah, the two are incredible.

I simply thought that it was pretty impressive, but that's not the reason why I am lying down this late at night without being able to sleep.

Normally, this would be a time when I would be sleeping already, and yet, I still have my eyes open. There's two reasons for this, but in essence, there's only one.

First, because of the identity of Iroha-chan that Tomoe told us after Iroha-chan had gone to sleep.

And the second, the follow-up of her bodyguards.

"That girl is the princess of the influential military family, Osakabe from Kannaoi." (Tomoe) I did expect it, but it was exactly as I thought.

The aged man, his name was Shougetsu, right?

He also said something about Kannaoi, and I got cold sweat just thinking about how we may have done something incorrigible the very first day we entered Mizuha.

"But she isn't a princess with that much power. The Osakabe is a big household, so it seems like there's a lot of princesses and princes."
(Tomoe) But it seems like we are somewhat safe in that part.

If there's a lot of them and it isn't as if she has much power, there's still plenty room to redeem it.

And so, for the sake of that, we will have to keep Iroha-chan's mood from being harmed, and we also have to properly talk with her bodyguards.

It looks like she is attached to Tomoe, so the former one seems to be okay, that's why, what's next is to have a talk with Shougetsu-san and the others.

The promissory note of Sairitz-san can serve as proof for our identities.

Leaving aside the relationship between families, I think I can expect some effectivity.

It is fine as long as it serves as the impetus for a conversation.

Also, it seems like Iroha-chan herself doesn't know, but Sairitz-san has probably told the influential families about the Kuzunoha company and about Raidou as well.

Based on her personality, she wouldn't let me inside the country without doing at least this much.

I am sorry for Tomoe, but it would be a bit hard for me to play as Koumon-sama while carrying a bomb.

Maybe we should quickly find those guys and finish the talk with them.

"...As expected, you will be going?" (Tomoe)

"You were awake huh." (Makoto)

"I am paying attention to the surroundings. If they attack this place, I was thinking about playing around with them." (Tomoe) "There's some in our vicinity huh." (Makoto)

"She is their princess after all. They most likely investigated desperately. Hm?" (Tomoe) "Eh?" (Makoto)

Seems like Tomoe noticed something, her gaze turns to the side.

Geh, are they attacking?

We were one step too late huh.

“Waka, that.” (Tomoe)

“...The katana of Iroha-chan? For a sword that a child has in her possession, it even has magic power clad in it though.” (Makoto) It is glowing.

Well even if I say so, it is only a bit that’s leaking out from the scabbard.

That hue was gentle, it reminded me of the light of fireflies.

When she was swinging it around, it was also glowing, but for what purpose?

“It doesn’t seem like it is doing anything bad, but want to try unsheathing it?” (Tomoe) “Don’t wake up Mio and Iroha-chan, okay?” (Makoto)

“I know.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe unsheathes the katana without any restraint.

It seems like it is not the type that can’t be unsheathed unless it is the owner.

Hmph~.

The edge part is letting out a faint light from here and there as it coils around it.

It doesn’t seem like the katana itself is glowing.

It is as if a lot of small grains of light were overlapping together...?!!!

“What could this be? The magic power it is letting off is so feeble that I just can’t grasp it... I can understand that this is not a katana that’s oriented for battle, but...it is well-made for an artistic good.” (Tomoe)

“Tomoe, about the place where the light is strong...” (Makoto) “Yes?”

“Isn’t the edge chipped?” (Makoto)

“Edge chipped? Oh, now that you mention it, there’s a small chip.” (Tomoe) ...

I think it is different from what I am thinking.

Someone who knew about the original one, made a replica of it.

That's definitely the case.

In the first place, there's no way it would exist in this world, and it wouldn't be the size of a short sword and used as a katana to protect a kid.

It was my misunderstanding.

"I see. Well...put it away." (Makoto)

"As you will." (Tomoe)

Seeing my state, Tomoe tilts her head and nods.

"Anyways, I will be going." (Makoto)

"In my opinion, I would prefer to stay like this until Beren and the others join us though..." (Tomoe) "Nope. I will be going." (Makoto)

"If Waka says so, it can't be helped. Do your best in filling that crack." (Tomoe) "We don't know what might occur from now on, you know. It is best to not increase the trouble pointlessly." (Makoto) "Is that so. As you will. Lorel seems to be a country that's more fun than I thought it would be, so I will step back from this one." (Tomoe) "Yeah yeah." (Makoto)

We still have the labyrinth waiting for us.

Also Futsu.

In Lorel, there's quite a lot of people that know about it.

Even though it was a dragon that I didn't hear at all of in Rotsgard.

I can't tell at all what kind of existence it is.

I haven't even heard that name from Root before.

But well, I don't want to go through the trouble of going back to ask him.

There's plenty enough time in the moments I have classes at the Academy.

Right now, what's most important is Shougetsu-san.

From what Tomoe said, they are close to the inn, so everyone should be alright.

If I leave the inn alone, it is almost certain that they will make contact with me.

At this occasion, it can't be helped if I end up being attacked.

It is the usual.



For example; if in a fishing game, there's a bait called 'Misumi Makoto', its rarity would be the highest.

They would all bite and the bait would be worn out.

If there was an accessory in RPGs with the name 'Misumi Makoto', only the encounter rate of the troublesome enemies would increase massively.

The rarity...would be trash level.

In other words, when I left the inn so that Shougetsu-san and the others would attack me, I received attacks that surpassed the two digits.

Even in a big city, no, it is exactly because it is a big city that walking alone is dangerous though.

On top of that, I staggeringly walked out from Mizuha's number one inn.

Hahahaha, I understand that this is my just desserts.

Even so! Attack me sooner, you guys!

Is what I thought for a slight instant.

"What household are you from?!"

"Misumi household." (Makoto)

I tested saying this.

It would be troublesome if I introduce myself and there's a Misumi family in this country after all.

No matter if Sairitz-san's influence is strong, she wouldn't be able to change the name of an entire household just because of me.

“Misumi? Uhm...”

“...I haven't heard of it.”

“It is not a name I know of.”

The bodyguards, old man, and the servant-looking people shake their heads sideways.

Then there's no problem in introducing myself normally then.

I was dragged into a building that doesn't seem to be in use, was tied to a chair, and was left in the middle of the room.

It is a room with no windows.

“Why did you kidnap Iroha-sama?”

The one in charge of my interrogation seems to be a woman named Akashi-san.

Yuduki-san was also right by her side, and Shougetsu-san and the other women were slightly further at the back.

“That's...one of my companions mistook you all for bad guys that wanted to kidnap a child.” (Makoto) “That scene had circumstances involved, and we did say that it was a misunderstanding, you know.” (Akashi) “Yeah, you are right. Ah, are your burns alright?” (Makoto) “!! It is not something you bastard should be concerned abo—” (Akashi) “...We are fine. We have finished the treatment.”

Akashi-san seemed to be angered, but Yuduki-san had a calm face all around as she answered me.

They are mostly women, so I was secretly worried.

“That's great. I was worried it would leave scars.” (Makoto) “...And so, you are going to return Iroha-sama, right?” (Akashi) “Of course. We don't have any intentions of hurting that princess-sama.” (Makoto) “?!”

“Now then, I think doing this will make us return to the first question all over again, that question about ‘who are you?’. Ah, Akashi-san, can you please check the left pocket of my coat?” (Makoto) “...’Check out the place

you couldn't check before', is that what you are saying?!" (Akashi) Before being tied, I was thoroughly searched all over my body by Akashi-san and Yudoku-san.

My coat is a special article that you can't take off the buttons unless it is me, so it must have made them pass an unpleasant time.

"I am a merchant, so there are some things I wouldn't want others to see. You two were groping my whole body a while ago, so in that situation...I couldn't do much, you know." (Makoto) "Who would want to touch your body because they want to?!" (Akashi) "...Akashi, change. Your left pocket, right? This is...a promissory note?" (Yudoku) "Yes, I think this will serve as proof of my identity." (Makoto) "Wait, this is..." (Yudoku)

Yudoku-san lightens her hand with magic, and looks carefully at the promissory note.

Yudoku-san is intellectual and can be reasoned with.

Akashi-san is impulsive, and when hostile, it makes it hard to make a conversation with her.

For this situation, Yudoku-san is the most suited one, but...in my opinion, Akashi-san is the one that gives me the better impression.

She doesn't look like she is two-faced, so that's what I think with that one point.

I might be a serious case of two-facedness though.

"Shougetsu-sama." (Yudoku)

"Umu. What is it? The family crest of Kahara?! Also, this shape...the highest of accommodations?" (Shougetsu) As I thought, it had extraordinary effect.

This is a promissory note that an influential person of Lorel has given to an outside guest, so I can expect diplomatic-like effects as well.

The feudal lords, nobles, and military families are weak against this kind of things.

Well, rather than weak, it is more like, it can properly deal with them.

“The name at the back is...Sairitz herself. Could it be...” (Shougetsu)
“Shougetsu-sama?”

“Akashi, Yuduki, untie the rope.” (Shougetsu)

“W-Why?!” (Akashi)

“That promissory note alone doesn’t warrant untying the rope. They have kidnapped Iroha-sama here!” (Yuduki) “That person, Raidou-dono... is a Wise.” (Shougetsu)

?

He asserted it?

Now that I think about it, that soldier also did that, but...is that something that can be asserted by only the outward appearance.

Akashi-san and Yuduki-san have been treating me fairly roughly here though.

In other words, my appearance is terrible, but even so, with only a few similar traits, you can’t just pinpoint a person as a Wise.

The similar points of that soldier and Shougetsu-san...

They saw the promissory note.

But Yuduki-san did as well.

No, if it’s only looking, Tomoe, Mio, and I have done so too.

We three didn’t read or see anything that pointed me as a Wise in that promissory note.

In that case...

“You can guess the person is a Wise by the promissory note, or there’s some inner information that can be used to pinpoint it?” (Makoto) A part that only people with an official position can understand.

That’s the most probable possibility.

“Just as you have guessed. Also, to think you were the Raidou-dono of Kuzunoha company. It is certainly true that just having the name of that

fox woman is not enough but, it looks like I have no choice but to see this as a misunderstanding from both sides.” (Shougetsu) Shougetsu-san makes a big sigh and shows me a smile.

A gentle smile.

It seems like the first compromise has been reached, maybe.

Damn it, that promissory note.

For what reason was it made to treat me as Wise?

Is this also a setup from Sairitz-san directed at the mercenary group?

Rather than a demi-human looking person, they would treat me better if I am seen as a Wise. It doesn't have much demerits for me, which makes it even more unpleasant.

“I haven't consented yet though!” (Akashi)

“Me neither. I understand that Iroha-sama has not gathered enough attention from the world to the point of appointing a Wise-sama as an assassin, but...” (Yuduki) Akashi-san and Yuduki-san are still heavily on guard.

If I had to place a stance on the servants, I would say they don't agree either.

It is only Shougetsu-san who understands a variety of things and has given up on doing anything to me.

“It is only on a limited amount of people, but the notification has reached me as well. There will be a company that will be going to the Yaso-Katsui labyrinth, so if that group has the Kahara household's promissory note, we should cooperate.” (Shougetsu) “That's exactly who we are.” (Makoto)

“Right. Akashi, Yuduki!” (Shougetsu)

“Understood!” (Akashi)

“...Understood.” (Yuduki)

Because of the strict tone of Shougetsu-san, I was finally freed.

But the dissatisfaction of the two is strong.

They don't seem to like it at all.

For now, they have returned me my promissory note.

Well, it is that huh. It is okay to be treated as a Wise in the time I am in this country.

It would be a pain to try and negate it—ah!

Could it be that this is all within Sairitz-san's plan?

No, let's stop it.

If I end up overthinking it, I will only be digging deeper.

"We are in a season that's troublesome in a lot of meanings, you see. Please forgive us for our excessive behaviour." (Shougetsu) "Same here. Iroha-sama is resting at ease, so don't worry." (Makoto) "Then tomorrow... fumu, no..." (Shougetsu)

Okay, the problem has been resolved.

This is how it should be.

Nothing good comes from carrying the problem until it becomes bigger.

It must be severed while it is still budding.

This is what you call growing.

"Yeah, in the morning, I will tell Iroha-sama as well that there was a misunderstanding—" (Makoto) "Raidou-dono." (Shougetsu)

"Yes?" (Makoto)

What is it?

"There's something I want to talk to you about. Since you left at such late hours, it must mean that you were intending on providing us your time, is that right?" (Shougetsu) "Well, of course. Uhm, I thought our talk was wrapped up a few moments ago though." (Makoto) "To tell you the truth, there's some circumstances involving why Iroha-sama is currently in Mizuha." (Shougetsu) "Shougetsu-sama?!"

The old man talks, and the other four look at him with expressions of surprise.

I remember the cursed words of Tomoe.

No, I won't remember them.

I don't want to.

My growth, my growth is...!

"Don't worry, it is not like Raidou-dono and Iroha-sama are completely unrelated to it. Izumo-sama is your student, right?" (Shougetsu) "?!"

"..."

So we are pulling this now huh.

It would be a different story if this were to spare me from diving into the labyrinth!! But this just one-sidedly increase my job!!

T-This is not funny.

At this rate, my other students might bring me more trouble too. Jin...I currently can't find anything; Amelia, well, if it is related to Shiki, I won't need to do anything; Misura's problem has to do with the church, the number one place I don't like; in Daena's case, married problems, I ask that they don't trouble me with those; the matter with the Rembrandt sisters has already been resolved.

Even so, I feel like Jin and Amelia might still be holding some kind of bomb.

Even Izumo who didn't cause trouble until now is like this, you know.

I see.

Iroha-chan is his...

They really don't think at all about the difference in age huh.

It feels like the scenario where two old men were drinking tea while deciding if to marry each other's next born child.

Okay, I will listen to what you have to say.

It is related with me.

Because it is not assured that...it will be resolved smoothly after all!!

Chapter 246: Now that I think about it, that did happen

The things I know of Lorel Union, are actually not that much.

I only know that even when it is a continent, it is slightly isolated by mountain ranges, and that they adore Japanese Wise, and because of it, the country possesses a peculiar culture.

I only roughly know the structure of it.

Also, the fact that they are actually using kanji as Wise writing, which tells me that the influence of Japanese people is relatively big.

But this is the world of the Goddess.

The people I know from Lorel are my student Izumo, and the distinguished Sairitz-san. The features of those two are pretty different from those of Japanese.

If we to put together all the people, it is true that they look a bit more yellowish than white and black people, but they look more like they have a variety of features mixed from Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Japanese.

There's a lot of people with strong Japanese factors in them, which have an outward appearance that are pretty much to my liking, making the number of times I look at them again increase.

Since coming to this world, I have seen so many beautiful people, and yet, I feel like the time when I first arrived at Zenno and Tsige.

"And so, there's those kind of circumstances involved. It was a time that had a tense atmosphere going around, even within us." (Shougetsu) But, from the outside, you can't tell how much they have taken reference of Japan.

This country Lorel, is in a strange situation where the Edo period –that Tomoe loves– and the modern era have been fused.

It can't be called the latter periods of Edo, but even so, it is not in their initial stages either. It felt as if an outside culture in the Meiji era<1868–

1912> has begun to receive the Japanese culture in massive amounts.

What I can say for sure is that, in the past, it was a country that had Japanese factors by a lot.

It seems like Hibiki-senpai had come to Lorel recently, and she probably had a time when she felt nostalgic as well.

The city of Mizuha, the cityscape, the food; it has a feel as if a foreigner had gone to Japan once, and tried making a theme park out of that experience.

I think Mizuha is interesting.

I am looking forward to Kannaoi and the other places too.

And yet, the old man in front of me was speaking of something that was withering my motivation.

“Raidou-dono? The Raidou-dono that is working as the teacher of Izumo-sama. The fiance of Iroha-sama, Izumo-sama.” (Shougetsu) “I can hear you. I am listening.” (Makoto)

...

The talk of Shougetsu-san not only had the faint smell of trouble, it smelled completely like trouble.

To the point that just listening to it made my ears hurt.

Putting it shortly, it is a conflict between households.

Literally a strife of heirs.

The favorite dish of Tomoe.

That’s most likely why she poked her head into it in an instant.

The destination is Kannaoi, the type that had Yaso-Katsui involved, which is like the specialty product of that land. The kind of problem that has whatever-its-name magistrates, and the whatever-that-name-was big shots involved in it.

The local feudal lord in this case, would be the current head of the Osakabe family, maybe?

From what the Shougetsu-san said, it doesn't seem like the current feudal lord is suffering from any illness or weakened, so that should be the case.

Factions that wants to make the princess or prince of the family into their leader, and the princes and princesses that were not allowed to enter one, or have been judged as as an hindrance, are targeted.

The special 10% of the group.

'You have understood their standing, and you are already involved in it', is what the eyes of Shougetsu-san were saying.

There's still the 'escape' command, but in this case, Tomoe will be coming from behind anyways.

She will be making infinite petitions to me.

In essence, I have no choice but to get involved.

I don't know if our visit to Kannaoui in the middle of a household strife was a coincidence or the plan of someone, but if I wait till it ends, by the time that happens, the revolution in Tsige would be over too.

"Iroha-sama has the role of inviting the blood of the Ikusabe household into ours, and deepening our relationship." (Shougetsu) ...Isn't it more accurate to call it 'shouldering'?

She is just being one-sidedly made to shoulder this burden, by deciding the person they are going to be marrying before being born.

Using marriage as a political tool is something that happens not only in Japan but in every country. Thinking about it rationally, it isn't something to condemn.

In history, there's most likely a lot of situations where that happened, and it most likely happens in the modern era as well.

This kind of things probably still continue.

Becoming a family should be a simple act where the two trust each other, and are joined into the same house, but it does hold a strong significance.

Thinking about it in a plebeian mindset would be a mistake.

‘A mutual-love marriage is best’, this thought is in a part of my head, so I just can’t help but feel weird about it.

“She is the fiancée of Izumo after all. Moreover, it is not the wife entering the family, but the husband.” (Makoto) When you hear about the fiancée of a princess, you also think that it is the wife that is the one entering the family. But of course, there’s also the possibility of the contrary.

“In other words, it is one of the methods to peacefully settle the long dispute between households. It is literally the sentiments of the people that wish for peace.” (Shougetsu) “Calming down a dispute with marriage. Rather than bringing harmony between families, it is more like, assimilating a family huh.” (Makoto) How long-winded.

In the first place, the Ikusabe are in Naoi, and the Osakabe are in Kannaoui, and both of them hold territories in their respective lands, so I don’t think a single marriage will change anything drastically.

“Aside from Iroha-sama, he also has a lot of other fiancées promised to him, and yet, the moment their backing fell, there were a number of people that didn’t think favorably of this betrothal and stepped in to interfere.” (Shougetsu) “That’s why Iroha-sama’s life is being targeted.” (Makoto) Are they really going as far as aiming for her life?

Mizuha is pretty far away from Kannaoui.

If she has become the target of assassination, I think it would be quite careless to walk all the way to a place like this.

“In reality, the actions of the princess-sama this time has made us hold our heads in pain. Even though the seventh princess has already fallen into the hands of a ruffian, she decided to do something like land survey at this kind of time.” (Shougetsu) “...”

Right now, Shougetsu-san absent-mindedly said something incredible.

She went through the trouble of escaping from her room and running away from home, to secretly go and do land survey.

That princess is really quite decisive.

She is a girl that swims in an open air bath so, in other words, she is a little different from the princesses and high-class girls out there.

“But maybe this is a fortune within the misfortune. We have coincidentally had the chance to meet Raidou-dono who is heading to Kannaoui. This must be the guidance of the Spirit-samas and Wise-samas.” (Shougetsu) Shougetsu-san is the only one who is denoting us as allies while looking joyful.

The eyes of Akashi-san and Yudoku-san are telling me that they don't trust me yet.

The servants aren't showing much emotions and just staying at the back. Doesn't seem like they will be taking part in the conversation either.

“I don't really have much of a problem in having you accompany us on the way to Kannaoui, but...we are heading to the labyrinth with a business in our hands, so I don't think we will be able to cooperate as much as you wish us to.” (Makoto) Let's properly delineate a line.

If it is in an extent that can coexist with my job, I don't mind a certain degree of trouble, but I can't prioritize this and put the labyrinth for later.

The number one reason for coming to Lorel was because we were doing this for Tsige.

I can't forget that part.

“No problem. It is fine with having Raidou-dono bring along Iroha-sama to Kannaoui. We will bring the double of Iroha-sama and serve as decoys. In that time, become the cover of Iroha-sama without making her stand out and—” (Shougetsu) “Who's there?!” (Yudoku)

Yudoku-san shouts and takes her stance.

There's no windows here.

There's also no presence of an exit and entrance.

Then...above huh.

At the other side of the ceiling.

Three people.

The moment I thought about doing something, a part of the ceiling had crumbled, and instead of escaping the instant they were exposed, they rushed in to attack.

How bold.

The rope has already been untied, so I am a free person.

I check the opponents.

Because of the crumbled ceiling, dust is fluttering about, and armed shadows were keenly moving within it.

Each of the three attacked Shougetsu-san's group.

Instead of black clothing to slip into the night, they are armed huh.

It seems like this group was aiming for a bloodshed from the very beginning.

“Akashi!!” (Yuduki)

“I know, I leave the old man and the women to you!!” (Akashi) The two bodyguards here also begin their movements well.

It seems like Akashi-san is carrying two while Yuduki-san is tasked to protect Shougetsu-san and the others.

A small confined space. Even if they have already noticed their presence, there's no agitation even when it was a surprise attack.

I couldn't tell at the time with Tomoe, but it seems like these two are good in their coordination.

Yeah.

This might end without the need for me to help.

These people aren't using thought transmission.

If thought transmission was used, I would be able to intercept it, so I can say this for certainty.

If it's intercepting thought transmissions, leave it to me.

I can take care of all the thought transmissions within a 3km radius.

...I definitely won't tell that to anyone though.

Being seen as a walking wiretap would be troublesome in a lot of meanings.

Wait.

If they aren't using thought transmission, in this situation, it should be a moment they would want to escape no matter what, right?

Then, why did they go for an attack rather than escaping?

If their aim is Iroha-chan, information about there being a decoy should be pretty important to have their companions know about.

"Oraa! If you have trained arms, come to me! If you don't come, I will be the one...wait, what?!" (Yuduki) "Low-lives that aim for people that don't have weapons are going to face my wrath...what?" (Akashi) Right after their thoughts had taken in the situation, they noticed another possibility.

The movements as if aiming Shougetsu-san and the others was a faint!

The three, who I was following with my eyes while sitting, were heading towards my direction.

Why?

No matter how you think about it, I am still an outsider.

Shouldn't I be the last one you aim for?

The three come to me from three different directions. With no hesitation, and with advanced coordination, they took an attack stance at the same time.

Pretty high level.

Even so, I haven't heard about the spies of Lorel's being high level.

That description applies to Aion Kingdom.

Even I who have fought against the spies of Aion, was surprised by the

proficient movements of these three.

These are not movements of a spy...they are the moves of an assassin.

“Sharp Step.”

“Enhance – Death’s touch.”

“Largo Tempo.”

The three activated their skills at the same time.

Speed up, increase in attack power plus added effect for chance of instant death, pain numbing.

All of them had effect in the whole party.

This is one of the higher jobs of Shadow Thieves, the skills of the Shadowless.

I have an acquaintance in Tsige that was a Shadow Thief, so I could tell the effects of the skills.

Thief, assassin; whichever it is, the three that have the same advanced-class jobs are coming towards me with the intent to kill me.

Pain numbing will be troublesome when trying to make them spill the beans, so I will dispel that one first.

Just by having a bit of buffs placed on themselves won’t make them pass through my Magic Armor.

It is said that even a master will have difficulties dealing with attacks from three different directions at the same time, but this is a fantasy world with magic.

None of the daggers reach me and were stopped by the Magic Armor.

...

“You went through the trouble of buffing yourselves, but I will have to cancel th—” (Makoto) Ah, there’s no need to make them talk.

The eyes of this girl...so that’s what this is.

“W-What?!” (Akashi)

Akashi-san was surprised that the assassins' attacks were redirected at me, and that the attacks didn't manage to work and had stopped; she made a shout with both of those emotions.

Ah, as I thought, from within the people here, she might be the one I like the most.

"How pitiful, a puppet." (Makoto)

I mutter these words.

The three assassins, young girls.

Those eyes of theirs were muddy with thick magic power.

There's no need to check thoroughly. Their whole bodies are being invaded by it.

I know of this. This is the ability of 'that person'.

"...For the sake of the hero."

"You are the enemy of Tomoki-sama."

"Raidou, definitely kill."

Just how much of it was actually the order of Tomoki, and just how much was it the rampaging of these girls? I can't tell that.

At this point, that doesn't matter.

If they wanted to, they would be able to show suitable strength, and yet, they were like machines. An accurate, coldhearted, and distasteful attack.

That Tomoki, it seems like he hasn't changed.

"Can't be helped huh." (Makoto)

"...Eh?"

Yuduki-san probably noticed the change in my emotions, or maybe she reacted to something that was unexpected, she made a voice that reflected those kind of feelings from her.

Judging from her timing, it might be because she saw my actions. It is harder to distinct exactly because she is a person that seems to be pretty

perceptive.

At the same time as I muttered this, I change gears and grab the neck of the assassin at the right with the hand of the Magic Armor, and...break it.

I did the same with the one at the left, grab her head and crush it onto the wall.

Luckily, there's no one close to the one at the front, so I continuously shot Brids at her chest and pierced through three points of her.

From the three holes that formed a triangle, the one at the top was the biggest. You could clearly see the other side through those holes.

It is nice that there was no annoying screaming.

If that guy is doing something bad in Lorel, it might not be such a bad idea to moderately crush what he is doing.

Having a conversation with him...at this point, no way.

If he comes to make a stupid negotiation with me again, even if I am to make the Empire my enemy, I wouldn't mind.

I thought that Izumo got me involved with Iroha-chan, but now there's the possibility that this was a plot from Tomoki.

Seriously, good grief.

"Aah..."

Shougetsu-san and the others were stiffened.

Crap, was it bad for me to clean this up?

"Ah, sorry. Was it bad for me to clean it up? It seemed like they were assassins though." (Makoto) Just in case, I don't mention that this is related to Tomoki and the Empire.

I want some positive proof of how much relation he has.

It is fine to just bring this information back and have Tomoe make a different team to leak the information.

"They seemed like...quite the proficient fighters though..."

“Ah, well, to a certain extent, yeah. But we have also gone through our share of struggles, so something of this level, no matter how many there are, it won’t be a problem. I’m on active duty after all.” (Makoto) I crushed the head of one of them, but since I have the chance, let’s try checking the faces of the remaining two.

I take off the cloth from the face of the first and third one.

Hm?

Could it be...I feel like I have seen their faces before...

Ah!

The girls that Tomoki was going to exchange with me for Tomoe!

That means, the other one was also one of them.

Hah...to think that these girls were dispatched to Lorel after that.

How pitiful.

Let’s pray for them.

Pray that they don’t get involved with me and Tomoki in their next life.

“You have seen them before?” (Akashi)

Maybe Akashi-san still hasn’t gone out from fighting mode yet, her tone was rough as she asked me who had my hands joined together.

“Nope. Death is something that accompanies battles, but isn’t it fine to pray after it is over?” (Makoto) It is a bit of a lie.

It is because I somewhat know them that I am now praying for them.

That’s the truth.

“Well, that’s your freedom. Uhm, sorry. I just can’t like merchants. But I have now understood that you are not a simple merchant. That’s why, it might be for a short time but, I-I look forward to working with you.”

(Akashi) “Same here. Look forward to working with you.” (Makoto) “... Without a single change in temperament, and without a single change in the color of your face, you finished the assassins with polished movements. Whatever your job may be, you have shown me something

incredibly terrifying. From now on, I will be careful with my behavior.”
(Yuduki) “It is not that much. I am simply a merchant that is used to a certain extent of trouble.” (Makoto) It seems like Akashi-san and Yuduki-san have a better evaluation of me.

Better?

Leaving aside Akashi-san, Yuduki-san has a pale face. I wonder if that can be considered a better evaluation.

She did say that she will be careful with her behavior, so there's no need to care about the details. Yeah.

I simply eliminated the enemies that we had no point in conversing with.

Seriously, how exaggerated.

Shougetsu-san has his eyes wide open.

The servant-san had fainted at some point in time.

Well, with this, it seems like the matter with Shougetsu-san and Iroha-chan will be wrapped up.

Then, let's go for the exchange of information.

If I remember correctly, Beren-san said that he will be visiting his former homes, and after that, headed to the mountains. The rare composition of Arkes and Forest Onis have gone to investigate the valley of Yaso-Katsui and the vicinities of Kannaoui, but...I wonder how they are doing.

Chapter 247: The strength of the assassins

“Uff, that really got me. That man was outrageously skilled.”

Directing her gaze at the three corpses, Akashi had sheathed her sword and was now scratching her head.

“Umu, rather than us, Iroha-sama would be safer with Raidou-dono. In that time, we will find the assassins and eliminate them. And by the time we return to Kannaoui, the situation should have been resolved.”

(Shougetsu)

“After babysitting, we are now fishing. We have been way too busy lately, seriously.” (Akashi)

“Don’t say that.” (Shougetsu)

“‘Kay ‘kay.” (Akashi)

Akashi was talking with someone who is most likely her superior, Shougetsu, with words that were not really polite.

But there was no intention of going against him from her words, and it seems like she is properly accepting his orders and objectives. Leaving aside her speech and conduct, it can be seen that their relationship is good.

“Nei, sorry but, I leave the double of Iroha-sama to you.” (Shougetsu)

“Understood.”

After Shougetsu ordered this to the servant, one of the servants that was at the leftmost side responded and turns around.

In an instant, her appearance turned into that of Iroha with her princess clothes.

It was a splendid transformation.

Looking at that skillful display, it can be seen that this wasn’t the first time the girl called Nei has done this kind of job.

“ ... ”

“What’s wrong, Yudoku? Since the time we saw him off, or more like, since the time he finished the assassins, you have been kind of strange, you know?” (Akashi)

Akashi asked this to her partner that has had a hand on her mouth and been completely silent since the time Raidou left.

Yudoku is not a person of many words to begin with, but Akashi felt that this time’s silence was strange.

“Your manner of speech was slightly bothering too. We at least made clear what was his standing but, was it not enough?” (Shougetsu)

Shougetsu also asked Yudoku after Akashi.

At the very least, in the current stage, Raidou is a beneficial person for them, and it is important to create a favourable relationship.

And yet, the attitude of Yudoku towards Raidou was not that gentle, and for her that normally adapts faster to situations than Akashi, this was a strange attitude.

Being pressured by the two, Yudoku finally opened her mouth.

“You two, after looking at these assassins and Raidou-dono...you didn’t feel anything?” (Yudoku)

“Anything, you say. I did say this just a few moments ago: ‘he is not your average person’. The assassins were also hiding their strength when they fought us, so honestly, if they were to fight us seriously, I did think it would have been bad.” (Akashi)

“Akashi, can you really call yourself the bodyguard of Iroha-sama with that kind of thinking?! That level of assassins, even if they are three, you alone can do something about it! In the first place, the young uns these days are lacking in training. Every single one of them just runs for the flashy skills.” (Shougetsu)

Since the moment Akashi heard the words: ‘the young uns these days’, she knew that Shougetsu had begun again with his blabber and sighed once.

Yuduki still maintained that meek expression, but had a small smile showing in her face.

“Shougetsu-sama, we will of course not neglect our training in the future either, but this time, Akashi has a point.” (Yuduki)

“Yuduki! You are saying something like that as well?!” (Shougetsu)

“These three, they were quite skilled. They had stealth techniques to erase their presence and real strength, and it is because it was Raidou-dono that he was able to deal with it in that kind of way, but...I don't know if we would be able to hold them back even if we were in a one-on-one.” (Yuduki)

As Yuduki finished speaking, she closed her mouth and once again fell into pondering.

“What are you saying? Then, even if we were to add one more of you in your team, you wouldn't be able to hold back Raidou-dono for even five seconds? Is that what you saying? You two are the bodyguards of a Kannaoi princess, don't say something so pathetic.” (Shougetsu)

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“Akashi, Yuduki?” (Shougetsu)

“...It is exactly as you say, Shougetsu-jisan. Even if we were to make a party, even if we were to face him with an army, we probably wouldn't be able to stop him. Just saying but, we are on the level that we have been assigned as the bodyguards of the tenth princess with inheritance rights. But that wasn't a level like that, it was on a completely different plane. Even if we were to gather all the power of Kannaoi -no, of all Lorel, we wouldn't be able to defeat...that.” (Akashi)

“Shougetsu-sama, that person's strength was not on the level of a Rotsgard teacher. The words of Akashi had no falsehood, they are her true feelings. I am also of the same opinion.” (Yuduki)

Akashi and Yuduki had answered Shougetsu as they shook their heads

to the sides.

It is something they can't do anything about, that's the kind of face they were making.

"It is certainly true that his skills were splendid, but...I didn't feel that much force in him though. I have seen my share of strong people too. Hm..." (Shougetsu)

"That's something that you can only feel after getting actual experience, and can only feel when you are about to die. That feeling when you think: 'ah, he was someone that I shouldn't have fought with'." (Akashi)

"These assassins, they should have been remarkable people that surpassed level 300." (Yuduki)

"?!!! Three hu—what kind of stupidity are you spouting?" (Shougetsu)

"Here it is, her adventurer card. Geh, it seems like they were a lot higher than that, Yuduki. This is the first time I have seen the job 'Shadowless'." (Akashi)

Akashi searches for the card at the chest of one of the three and gives it to Shougetsu.

There, the numbers 420 were engraved on it.

At the job field, there's 'Shadowless' written.

It was just as Makoto had guessed.

"420...isn't that on the level of a country's strongest? Why are such strong people aiming for Iroha-sama...?" (Akashi)

"They have the ability to assassinate any prince or princess if they wanted to. No, putting it straight, they are not people that would fall to being assassins." (Yuduki)

"Not only that, they properly have a family name and a family crest engraved... Could this be...someone from Gritonia?" (Shougetsu)

"I can't tell that much, but honestly, if two or more assassins of the same level were to appear, I don't think that the two of us alone would be able

to do anything about it.” (Yuduki)

“This degree of internal problems, could it be that there’s a plot from foreign countries involved in this as well?” (Shougetsu)

The Osakabe princess, Iroha, is certainly being targeted by assassins.

It is something that can be sufficiently possible.

But assassins also have targets they aim for that have a suitable status for their level.

A level 420 is without doubt among the highest in terms of assassins.

This is the kind of people that the Limia kingdom and the Gritonia empire would send when they want to eliminate their targets with certainty.

These are not assassins someone would send, even if by mistake, to kill an influential noble of Lorel, and on top of that, a young princess that has low chances of succeeding the family.

“Ah, so that’s why Yuduki had fallen silent. It was because maybe Iroha-sama –no, not only her, us as well, have been involved in an unexpected conspiracy, right?” (Akashi)

Pon

Akashi hits her clenched right fist onto her left palm.

“That’s not it.” (Yuduki)

“Eh? It is not?” (Akashi)

“Not only 300, they were monsters on the level of over 400, and they had a job like ‘Shadowless’ which might even be able to assassinate dragons; I certainly was surprised by that, but that’s a small thing... compared to what we currently have on our hands.” (Yuduki)

“Is it small? I think that’s pretty important though. Assassinating dragons, if publicized well, military officers would be all over the place, you know?” (Akashi)

“What I mean is that compared to that man, Raidou, this is something

small.” (Yuduki)

“Raidou huh. I don’t think he is that much of a problem, you know. He seemed like a guy that could be spoken with, and he is strong, as an ally, he is reliable. In the first place, he crushed those Shadowless. Isn’t that impressive? But well, he did defeat them so easily that thanks to that, Shougetsu-jisan ended up getting angry at us though.” (Akashi)

“Mugh...” (Shougetsu)

Receiving the gaze of Akashi, Shougetsu shuts his mouth.

Now that he has seen the adventurer card, he couldn’t scold Akashi.

No matter how easy of a danger it was to wipe them out, in normal circumstances, it wouldn’t have been strange if they were all dead by now. This is something that he could understand.

“The problem is that very misunderstanding of Shougetsu-sama.”
(Yuduki)

“What do you mean by that?” (Shougetsu)

As if escaping from the gaze of Akashi, Shougetsu questions Yuduki.

“Raidou dealt with those three way too easily. With only that, you should be able to understand that a strong person has shown their power, and yet...” (Yuduki)

“Fumu.” (Shougetsu)

“Shougetsu-sama didn’t feel that much power from him. That was the same for me though.” (Yuduki)

“That’s true. The peculiar presence that strong people give out...I didn’t feel anything like that from him. He is working as a merchant, so I thought it was because of that, but is it a type of stealth technique?”
(Shougetsu)

“Yeah. He is most likely using some special method to conceal his ability. And in reality, I saw him fighting with magic, but I didn’t feel any spells or the preparation of them at all.” (Yuduki)

“That’s true. Now that you mention it, I wasn’t able to feel at all how much magic power he had.” (Shougetsu)

“That’s why, in our eyes, we ended up seeing the merchant Raidou-dono as a reasonably strong teacher of Rotsgard Academy that was able to deal with three assassins. Being able to conceal such high strength with a concealment technique, is one of my fears.” (Yuduki)

“Fear huh.” (Shougetsu)

A complicated expression appears on Shougetsu.

Even though they have made a cooperative relationship with Raidou just a few moments ago, they already have people in their camp that have minus emotions.

“And the other one, it leads to what I unconsciously said to him but... that heart...” (Yuduki)

“Heart?” (Akashi)

Akashi repeated what Yuduki said.

That’s because Akashi couldn’t understand the meaning of Yuduki fearing his heart.

“Killing three people without a single change from his usual self. Don’t you think that’s impossible, Akashi?” (Yuduki)

“Hey hey, they were enemies, you know? Of course that depends on the experience, but he was most likely used to being attacked. It is certainly true that, for a merchant, he was a bit too calm but...” (Akashi)

Reprimanding someone for killing enemies without any conflicting feelings, that’s what shouldn’t be done.

It is a fight with people that are aiming for your life.

First time, second, third; it may be slowly, but people get used to being attacked and fighting back.

Akashi was pointing out exactly that.

“It was different from being accustomed. You and I, if they are enemies,

we will of course cut down our enemies without hesitation. But at those moments, our bodies and hearts become that of someone that kills others.” (Yuduki)

“ ... ”

“...Fuh... You see, killing someone as naturally as breathing, as doing casual talk, as going to bed; that’s not something that someone would normally be able to do, right?” (Yuduki)

“Yeah, I probably wouldn’t be able to relax to that extent. I do still have that nature in me.” (Akashi)

“That’s right. That’s how it normally should be. That’s why, when Raidou was attacked, he was supposed to stand up, prepare to fight, and should have let out killing intent from his eyes and whole body, right?” (Yuduki)

“Well, that should be the case..... Eh?” (Akashi)

“I was observing him, but he didn’t show any signs of that. He was sitting and was exactly in the same state as he was when talking with Shougetsu-sama and us. Without showing a bit of fighting spirit and killing intent, he confirmed the attackers, and killed them. He looked at the assassins, and decided to fight them –no, to kill them, and that’s how he did it.” (Yuduki)

She didn’t feel the normal reactions a person should have when faced with a fight from Raidou.

Yuduki had seen a nature that she has never seen in the past.

“ ... ”

“Within the super first rate adventurers, I have heard that there are people that are always on their top gear level of concentration. This probably can also be applied to people that are always in the battlefield. Being in your top gear of concentration, for a normal person, they would only be able to maintain that state for several minutes at most, so in order to do this, you would have to face quite the training.” (Yuduki)

Whether it is in battle or in a match, it is obviously difficult to maintain

your highest level of concentration.

If replicated in your everyday life, it would make it even more difficult.

“ ... ”

“But it was also different from that. He did it so smoothly –no, he probably finished the fight before he even entered a battle state of mind. That’s why we were unable to properly grasp what had happened a few moments ago. Sorry, I am also unable to properly express what’s in my mind.” (Yuduki)

Yuduki not only fulfills the role of a warrior, she also has the job of seeing through people, appraise them, and evaluate them.

That’s exactly why she is able to observe many people and evaluate their characteristics.

This is something that Shougetsu, Akashi, and Iroha trust.

But right now, a person that even her eyes are unable to understand has appeared.

A strong person that was able to wipe out three remarkable assassins while still sitting and as if it was nothing. And yet, he is a merchant that they couldn’t feel any traces of being a combatant.

Yuduki herself was still unable to grasp the person called Raidou.

“A fight that’s not a fight...as if breathing. Hm, I don’t get it.” (Akashi)

On the other hand, Akashi who had heard the words of Yuduki seemed like she didn’t understand it much.

Her impression of Raidou was that as long as they don’t cause any problem, he wouldn’t be hostile towards them. It wasn’t such a complicated matter.

“Right. Once I finish sorting it out, I will speak of it again. And so, Shougetsu-sama, just as you said, it is certainly true that having Iroha-sama in the care of Raidou-dono is the number one safest choice.” (Yuduki)

“Un, yeah.” (Shougetsu)

Shougetsu was also thinking about the origin of this conspiracy.

The words of Yudoku returned him to his senses, and he pays attention to what she has to say.

“Is that really okay?” (Yudoku)

“What do you mean by that?” (Shougetsu)

“Something about Raidou-dono is...different. Is it really fine to leave Iroha-sama at his side?” (Yudoku)

“Are you saying that he will be a bad influence?” (Shougetsu)

“Honestly speaking, it is an anxiety that maybe Iroha-sama will end up changing.” (Yudoku)

“It can’t be helped if she were to change to a certain extent. In the first place, if we are talking about that, then her fiancé, Izumo Ikusabe, has already been influenced quite a lot by him after all. Whatever the case, in the future, he is a factor that we won’t be able to avoid anyways.” (Shougetsu)

“Izumo-sama...that’s true. Then, are you saying that she already has resistance towards his influence while in their travel to Kannaoui?” (Yudoku)

“Yeah. Also, Iroha-sama is a sagacious princess. Even if she were to have an interest in someone she doesn’t know, she won’t idolize them. More the case if they are only going to be together for a short amount of time. Believing in the princess in this kind of moments, isn’t that how loyalty works?” (Shougetsu)

“...Understood.” (Yudoku)

“I will be expecting things from your trained eyes in the future as well, but the situation seems to be a bit different from what we expected. Currently, we have no choice but to rely on him. With that into consideration, I am counting on you.” (Shougetsu)

“Yes.”

“Akashi as well, the journey from tomorrow on, I expect much from you. Even if they are skilled individuals, if it is you guys, I believe that you can manage.” (Shougetsu)

Shougetsu looked at the two bodyguards with a wide smile as if looking at his own granddaughters.

“Well, we will try to manage with our lives on the line.” (Akashi)

“I will do my best.” (Yuduki)

“Good grief, not only inside our country, to think we would be involved in a conspiracy from a foreign country as well. I can’t even get a comfortable retirement after reaching this age. The world is not kind to old people anymore.” (Shougetsu)

Contrary to his words, the old man’s spine was straightened which was seldom seen nowadays, and was brimming with vitality.

The girls that were looking at him had a troubled smile, and obeying Shougetsu who was walking at the front, they left the place.

Raidou is aiming for the labyrinth.

And as if welcoming him, a blood-stench strife had both arms wide open.

The moment Lorel learns of Kuzunoha Company...was close to coming.

Chapter 248: Wise gone wild

Outskirts of Kannaoi.

The surroundings of this land that is prominent in Lorel has a number of settlements that are enjoying the benefits of being in that place.

They are only situated close to a big city, but its significance is not something that can be called stupid.

There's a lot of paths that people can go through and the circulation of goods is more active than in other areas.

The number of adventurers and mercenaries is many, and the requests are easy to do.

Of course, it is not like there's no fitting demerit with it, but unless you are hard pressed for a method to protect yourself, this is simply a trivial problem.

That's why there are times when places fall and others emerge.

Repeating this cycle, Kannaoi is already surrounded by a large amount of villages.

"This place really is peaceful."

"The flow of people in the other villages was terrible and felt like they were on the verge of falling after all~. In terms of location, these villages are a bit more blessed so it is natural."

"I don't understand. Why do they decide to live in such a menial manner? Do they not think about proving their strength in Kannaoi? Being satisfied by simply gaining a bit of safety and circulation of goods is just..."

"...In order to make it in Kannaoi, you would have to be either an adventurer or a merchant. A craftsman has to create a stable standing after all. That's something difficult to ask from people like peasants or hunters."

"Based on Waka-sama's knowledge, whether they are peasants or

hunters, there have been people within those that have the diligence and skillfulness to create historical quality goods. I feel like craftsmen can do plenty well though.”

“That applies for the peasants in Japan. Even if in this place there’s that kind of knowledge going around, it is still Lorel Union.”

Crossing the mountains, there were fields spreading in their vision and livestock here and there.

Gazing at the villages that were more prosperous than average, two people were conversing.

The one with a slightly stiff tone and a reproaching view of the village’s way of living was a big man that surpasses 2 meters tall.

A monk’s stole, belled necklace, and gaiters. His attire was as if it was modeled after a mountain priest or a tengu.

In his right hand, he held a metal rod that seemed like the ones the Onis of hell from fantasy stories would use.

No matter who looked at him, it is not a substitute for a travelling stick, and it is not a khakkhara used for self-protection.

This metal rod was a clear blunt weapon.

At the shoulder of this big man, there’s a person sitting there.

A small brown skin girl.

Showing a childish behavior, she makes a fearless smile. Moreover, from her way of talking with the man, one can tell that the big man and her were of the same standing and that she is not a simple young girl.

Dressed in clothes that are similar to a hakama, strong spirited eyes, and a good-looking face, but contrary to that florid appearance, her clothes were brown and black, something plain and simple.

“The Wise-sama huh. Hearing the talk from Waka-sama, I actually had hopes though. But as expected, there’s not many people that have such interesting memories as him.”

“Our Waka is probably quite the special type. Also, we have found a lot of things to report back to Tomoe-sama and the others, like: the crops, food preparation, and their culture on festivals.”

“...The weapons and martial arts that are said to have come from the Wise-sama, and their special types of magics, it seems like they were not circulated much. Hah...when will I be able to use ninjutsu?”

“...This is only my intuition, but this time, with you being paired with me and Beren’s travel, I think you should give up on that line of thought.”

“Tch. Are you saying I can’t use ninjutsu?”

“Most likely. Tomoe-sama is training you in body techniques and thread techniques. If we are talking about shinobis, it would be more fitting for us Forest Onis and the Winged-kin after all~.”

The girl called Shii shrugged her shoulders and explains.

It is certainly true that the man admires shinobis and is aiming to be one, but 9 out of 10 that see him, would definitely say that he is a hand-to-hand fighter.

Even if he knows of the existence of ninjas, he is currently more of a wrestler.

It would be difficult to become a ninja.

“...Mugh.”

“Ah, Hokuto-cchi, we got guests~.” (Shii)

The name of the big man is Hokuto.

This name is the one that he has received from the person he has recognized as his master, Makoto.

One’s an Arke and the other a Forest Oni, and they are also the people that have been allowed in this trip by the Kuzunoha company.

They were ordered by Makoto’s close aide, Tomoe, to gather information before grouping up with them, and have entered Lorel from a different direction.

The two were travelling in the surroundings of Kannaoui as they endeavoured in gathering information.

“Again huh. It seems like it is from the labyrinth but they are quite the lively bunch huh.” (Hokuto) “Yeah. How many times is it now since coming to Lorel?” (Shii)

“I stopped counting by the twenties. The villages that have turned into ruins as well, I stopped counting around that number as well.” (Hokuto) “Incredible. I stopped caring by the time it reached 3.” (Shii)

“In terms of result, it is the same anyways. We don’t have any obligations with this village, but well, this can be considered a spark that was brought by us.” (Hokuto) “If that Picnic mercenary-san group were here with us, we would be able to take it easy though~.” (Shii) “They can’t always be with us. Ah, the way of fighting of those people was remarkable. It was on a level that’s worthy of reporting.” (Hokuto) Hokuto reminisces about the mercenary group that they met before.

They have been attacked by the mamonos of the labyrinth an innumerable number of times, but in one of those instances, they witnessed a mercenary group by the name Picnic Rose Garden fighting against mamonos.

“There’s also those mysterious adventurers.” (Shii)

“That huh. True. It was sublime.” (Hokuto)

“They most likely reside in different locations, but both of those groups live in the labyrinth. As expected, your environment is important~.” (Shii) “That’s something we have experienced with our own bodies as well.” (Hokuto) “...Yeah, that’s true.” (Shii)

On top of that, there was a time when they witnessed two adventurers defeating a mass of mamonos.

They only conversed with them in the place, but it seems like those two were also using the labyrinth as their headquarters.

In regards to the labyrinth, the two have a decent amount of things to report to Makoto and the others.

Shii and Hokuto had obtained a decent harvest.

Hokuto thought that he would definitely see the ancient martial arts and ninjutsus of Japan and was excited, that's why he is now depressed.

In the middle of that tensionless conversation, just as the two had perceived, mamonos were coming from the mountain foothills and heading towards the village.

And in between the mountain foothill and the village, Shii and Hokuto were there.

"Now then, Mio-sama ordered us to enter Kannaoi first and decide on the lodging. We can't take our time, Shii." (Hokuto) "Okay, I will help out~." (Shii)

Shii gets down from the shoulder of Hokuto.

At the front of the two, there were wild boars with their bodies covered in spines like a porcupine, and ugly big monkeys holding clubs and spears which were fitting of being called baboons; all of them letting out bloodlust.

Without any hesitation, Shii headed directly to the mass of mamonos.

"You forgot something, Shii." (Hokuto)

Hokuto tells her this promptly and throws her the metal rod that was in his hand.

That's right. Shii had analyzed Hokuto's battle style as body and thread techniques, it wasn't physical combat with a metal rod.

As if natural, Shii grabs the metal rod that was thrown at her with one hand and with her back facing him.

That was the weapon of a small Forest Oni girl.

"Hngh~it really does feel comfortable. The Elder Dwarfs are the best!" (Shii) "Rush to your heart's content and rampage. Any that leak, I will cut them all down." (Hokuto) "Undeerstood~~" (Shii)

It wasn't an action that they were ordered to do nor was it for the sake of

the village.

A single village was saved by them after a few minutes.



In one night, I heard a suspicious story.

After I separated from Shougetsu-san, Akashi-san, Yudoku-san, and the three servants, I returned to the inn.

Because I moved my body without a feeling of closure, I was training for a bit. Properly tiring my body.

Since we got a room with an open air bath, I enjoy a long bath by myself.

I enter my bed and tasted a pleasant sleep.

In the morning, we all enjoyed the breakfast of the costly inn.

Iroha-chan happily praised it, so it is most likely pretty good.

It was interesting to see vegetables similar to those I have seen in Japan with the seasoning style of Lorel, and Mio nodded several times while checking my reactions and the taste.

Tomoe was also greatly delighted, saying that it is nice.

Until this point, it was like the first act of a normal fun journey.

After that, we went shopping in Mizuha.

This was the seed of my headache.

I don't really mind buying souvenirs. We can bring them to Asora after buying them, and it won't turn into baggage.

There's also no problem in walking while eating.

There's a lot of places that we couldn't finish checking out yesterday, and in Lorel, there's a lot of delicious food that has stylized the Japanese taste and is interesting.

In one of the food carts, I saw something that looked like mitarashi dango, and when it had the taste that I was expecting, I was moved.

Then, what's the bad part?

Clothes, and accessories, or should I say miscellaneous goods. Well, those kind of things.

You could clearly tell that the Wise-sama –the Japanese– went full throttle in their messing around.

They are in a position that has strong influence in the society and have seriously done something stupid, so that's pretty ill-natured.

When I was introduced to a store that had many sorts of uniforms and entered, this is the first thing I thought: 'Ah, this is a cosplay shop'.

The clothes had a vibrant color that's different from the ones seen in the city.

Even though only the small details were different, there were many maid clothes that properly had different names for every variety and were officially approved by the public.

Sailor uniform, gym clothes; a variety of uniforms.

There's also underwears for the enthusiasts and accessories that were beautifully displayed.

The combination of clothings was also detailedly explained.

Must be something that's directed at sightseeing customers.

Of course, there are customers that come to buy uniforms, but it is probably also one of the famous tourist spots of this city.

Iroha-chan was also incredibly excited and was admiring some of the clothes that she yearned for.

It seems like the combination of white shirt and black corset is the number one most popular.

...Doesn't that look like the clothes of a casino dealer? That's what I thought.

I tried asking indirectly about the connection it has with gambling, and it seems like it is related to quite the formal business, so in order to wear it, you have to pass an exam first.

I thought that was way too much of a joke, period.

It seems like the nurse clothes are the uniforms of some shrines.

Sailor uniform and blazers, and there's even school swimsuits...

The Wise really did whatever they wanted.

Where are the prudent Wise?

Every one of them were gentlemen that officially placed their favorite cosplay and enjoyed themselves –no, they were perverts under the guise of gentlemen.

“By the way, what look is more to your taste, Waka?” (Tomoe)

“...”

Of course, Tomoe asked me something like that.

Mio continued making gestures as if confirming the fabric of a black nurse uniform, and was putting her all to listen to our conversation.

Black.

Even though it is a nurse uniform, it is black.

Is that also the uniform of a temple somewhere?

Are the males wearing black clothes instead of white clothes too?

Or could it be...they all wear nurse clothes no matter the gender...

That's impossible.

No, wait. The men of this world have high enough specs that even if they were to wear female clothes, they would without doubt look like beautiful girls.

If there's a special kind of person that has an interest in this peculiar genre, then there's plenty possibility that this could be used as the uniform for both genders...

“Even if you ask me about my tastes...I didn't have much interest in cosplay.” (Makoto) This is the truth.

I do think that moderate amounts of exposure is likeable, but in my case,

I don't really have any specific taste in this type of clothes.

If it is something that's closely related to me, then school uniforms. In our school, they wore blazers, but I also like sailor uniforms too.

But I like mannish clothes like the office lady uniforms too.

Of course, whether it is normal, casual, or formal clothing, as long as it suits the person, I don't really mind.

There's no clothes here that I am unable to handle the level of exposure anyways.

In that sense, I would be mostly the type that's more interested in what's inside.

"What a shame. If you had one, I would definitely try it out though. I see. I think this one is pretty interesting. What do you think?" (Tomoe) "Pfft!!" (Makoto)

Without any sort of embarrassment, what Tomoe took from the hung clothes was a bunny suit.

It is not the funny looking one that's like a stuffed toy, it is the erotic one.

There's even ears.

Seriously Tomoe?

Right now, your character inside my head is beginning to crumble.

"Oops, I got it wrong, it was this one." (Tomoe)

Did she really make a mistake?

Or did she just corrected herself because of how shocked I was?

That will remain a mystery.

Tomoe takes the clothes that were next to the bunny suit.

A black suit.

It is the type that is pretty tight and shows quite a lot of the person's figure.

It looks like it is aimed for female.

From what I see, it is exactly a suit, so I feel like it can be used by either gender though.

They said the uniform comes with the complete set, so...the necktie is probably also counted in the uniform.

And so, it is for female use huh.

Yeah, it is okay.

“A suit huh. If it’s Tomoe, it will most likely match you.” (Makoto) But the color is black.

And it is the black that can be called pitch black.

At this level of black, I honestly think it would only be used for weddings or funerals.

I want to hear about its use, but I also don’t feel like asking and just let it go.

“...Fumu.” (Tomoe)

“Tomoe?”

“Clerk, I will be buying this. I will also be buying a number of others, so I ask you to take my measurements.” (Tomoe) “Are you an impulsive buyer?” (Makoto)

You didn’t check the price.

However, it was an enviable prompt decision.

Tomoe then said: ‘Well then, see you later’, and went with the clerk.

By the way, the price is...uwaaa, it is quite the good price.

...Ah, but different from Japan where they are mass produced by sizes like S and M, and mostly only resize the hems, in this place, they put samples of the clothes and make clothes matching the measurements of the specific customer.

They cut the cloth and literally make the clothes.

When thinking like that, this is actually a reasonable price.

As expected, they won't have all the sizes here and cost several thousands.

It is not like it is armor, but even if it is not that much of a big deal, it is still an uniform that takes money to make.

Tomoe dressed in a suit would be a fresh sight, and it seems like she took a liking to it, so oh well, that's fine.

"Seriously, that Tomoe. Ah, Mio." (Makoto)

"Yes, Waka-sama?" (Mio)

"If you have any clothes you want, you can buy them, ok? The one's here are not for protection, so it will be for Asora use, but if there's any you like, tell me." (Makoto) "Then...this. I am interested in it, but..." (Mio)

I thought she would ask me what I thought about the black nurse outfit, but it seems like Mio had taken different clothes.

So it wasn't what I thought.

It is red.

Rather than calling it a vivid red, it is more of a deep red. Is this what they call rouge color?

A kimono huh.

Hm?

Ah!!

What Mio has in her hands is an outfit that's really similar to a kimono.

It feels like Japanese clothes.

But on top of it, there's an apron included as well.

In other words, the clothes of a housewife.

We are talking of Mio, so she was probably attracted by the apron.

Or maybe she thought those were Japanese clothes that came in a set.

Red housewife outfit huh.

Not bad.

There's also blue, indigo, and green that seem to be good too.

Leaving aside a way too vivid red and a pure white one, there's definitely a lot of hues here that calm me down just by looking at them.

There's also patterned ones, like: polkadots, feathers, paint brushes, checked, and many others.

The apron itself is bright white, but there's a lot of varieties in their size and the frills.

Yeah, I don't get tired even when looking at them.

"That's the outfit of a housewife. Won't it be nice to wear them when you are cooking? Patterned kimonos would also look good on Mio after all." (Makoto) "Housewife? But here it says that this is an uniform for judges that verdict sins?" (Mio) "Eh? Judge?" (Makoto)

Seriously?

"No, it must be my imagination. Ah, clerk. This, give me the ones from here until there. Where should I take the measurements?" (Mio) "She casually acts like a celebrity?!" (Makoto)

Mio leaves the judging matter as her imagination and promptly purchases all the housewife outfit series.

She left in the same direction as Tomoe.

"..."

"Geh, it seriously is the uniform for judges, oi." (Makoto)

"..."

The headache these Wise are giving me isn't stopping.

"What Iroha-chan, is there any clothes you want? That dealer outfit, maybe?" (Makoto) I can have Shougetsu-san return me the money later anyways, so I don't mind buying her one at least, but it will probably take time before it is finished.

I am planning on getting the clothes of Tomoe and Mio in our way back, so what I should do about this?

Should I get her clothes as well at that time, and send them to her later? Or contact Shougetsu-san and leave it in his hands?

But, a child-sized dealer outfit...what an incredibly immoral feeling it gives.

“Raidou-sama is really rich-desu ne.” (Iroha)

“Thankfully, my business is doing well, but it is not like I am rich, my company is the one that’s rich.” (Makoto) “The money of the company is the money of Raidou-sama who is the representative, isn’t it?” (Iroha) “I wonder about that. There’s definitely my share in it, but there’s also the share of Tomoe, Mio, and all the employees that earned the money, so it isn’t all mine. About what happened a moment ago, those two are doing their best, so I was simply telling them that it was okay to buy it if they wanted.” (Makoto) “...I feel like you are saying something outrageous as if it were natural.” (Iroha) “Eh? What part?” (Makoto)

I don’t think I have said anything strange though.

“I don’t understand it well either.” (Iroha)

What’s with that?

This one matter with the store has already taken away quite a lot of my vitality, so please don’t go saying enigmatic things.

I was planning on leaving Mizuha in the afternoon and head towards Kannaoui, but Tomoe and Mio said they wanted to buy one more set of clothes, so that would be hard to achieve.

I would like to avoid that at all costs.

To think that shopping would be prolonged even with these two (and the additional member).

I have never taken more than 30 minutes in my shopping.

As expected, Tomoe and Mio are still women.

Good grief.

Chapter 249: Deepening mystery of the sprites

“Even though this is our long awaited chance in Lorel, I didn’t expect we would be finding traces of the empire’s hero. It is really unpleasant.”

(Tomoe) “It is a Japanese-like place, but I don’t think there’s anything he would want in this country though. The top priestess, Chiya-chan, is already in Hibiki-senpai’s group after all, and he doesn’t seem like a person that had any lingering attachment to Japan to begin with.”

(Makoto) “On top of that, Sairitz already knew of his charm ability. If all the spies return with their eyes as hearts, not understanding it until now would be stupid.” (Tomoe) “Such a mystery. He can’t directly charm the core members of Lorel, so maybe they are planning an insurrection and doing stealth work?” (Makoto) “In this time when they don’t even know what direction the war of the demon race will take, would they do something like this? Not being able to completely rule out that possibility is the unpleasant part of that man.” (Tomoe) “...I don’t think he is that much of an idiot though.” (Makoto) In the end, after buying around ⅓ of the cosplay shop –no wait, that wasn’t the name– the Lorel’s traditional clothes store, and throwing it in Asora, we learned that Shougetsu-san and company had already left Mizuha, and headed to Kannaoui.

Now that I think about it, we didn’t decide who would be leaving first.

But well, they left first and us after, so no problem in that I suppose.

When I asked the soldier¹, who is completely treating me as a Wise, at the gates of the city, he said that they were accompanied by a princess that looked like Iroha-chan.

So they really had a double huh. I was secretly impressed.

We were currently riding a high class carriage that we were recommended so that we would be able to relax, and am currently chatting with Tomoe.

Mio and Iroha-chan went to the coachman side.

But well, it is not like they are driving the horse, they are simply enjoying the view.

We have already told the horse that our destination is Kannaoi, so there should be no problems.

“At present, we have notified Beren and the Forest Onis of the charm of the hero. With that in mind, they should be gathering information in Kannaoi, and if he turns into an obstacle, we will have no choice but to deal with it at that time.” (Tomoe) “Right. Our objective is only the labyrinth. If we don’t finish that matter first, we won’t be able to take our time with Tomoki.” (Makoto) From what I have heard of Tsige’s situation, it seems like time is currently our ally.

The kingdom side and the revolutionary side are unable to forcefully restrain Tsige, and the conditions are slowly turning to Tsige’s favor.

It would be way too optimistic to think that Tsige will be able to continue the push like this, but it isn’t a dangerous state where they will bring an all-out attack by today or tomorrow.

Rembrandt also said this, the number one worst situation would be that the two powers decide to take hands and beat up Tsige once. Sweep clean Rembrandt-san who is currently raising for independence, us, and the adventurers, and after that, both powers will return to fighting each other.

That’s why, in order to stop them from doing this union, Tsige tries not to gather up their forces and is mainly moving the adventurers to do raids.

The benefits that Tsige and the borders of the world give is enormous.

To the point that there’s plenty possibility the Aion kingdom and the revolutionary force would temporarily stop their fight and make Tsige stop thinking about getting independence.

If that situation arrives faster than expected, Tsige’s surroundings, and maybe worse, the town itself will become a battlefield.

The reason I came to Lorel is exactly in order to prepare for this situation.

That's why, as long as Rembrandt-san is able to advance with the negotiation well, there's the chance that there won't be any need for the mercenaries in the near future.

Looking at it for a future, they will be a necessary force for the protection of the town that has gained independence, and to nurture defensive forces, also it is true that there's nothing pointless about achieving our objective.

If possible, I want to only concentrate on that objective without any sort of obstruction.

Being involved with Tomoki is a lot more bothersome than Senpai.

If he sees Mio, he might even want Mio as well.

Even if he is a teenager, his sexual desire is abnormal.

Leaving it as a delusion would be charming, but would someone really want to create a harem in real life?

That's just an incredible pain.

Hold the political power of the Empire, make a harem, have a lot of babies; and he is a human, so even if he does his best with magic, he won't be able to live long.

Yeah, I can clearly tell that the future would be real muddy.

Tomoki, just what does that guy even want to do?

I don't understand him at all.

"Kuku, it is true that I also don't want to get involved with that guy either. Ah, now that I think about it, I have received a number of reports from Beren." (Tomoe) "From Beren? What is it?" (Makoto)

"He said there's a number dwarfs living in the settlements at the mountain recesses that want to migrate to Asora. Also, extra information about that sprite called Marikosan." (Tomoe) "Migration huh. If they are acquaintances of Beren, there's no problem with simply leaving them under the care of the Elder Dwarfs, and if they are people that are not deeply involved with the country, I don't really mind. Should we have Shiki

do the interview?” (Makoto) “Right. Then I will ask Shiki of it.” (Tomoe)

“And so, what’s this information about Marikosan.” (Makoto) The mysterious sprite, Marikosan.

For now, my brain pictures them as female Elder Dwarfs, but it seems like they are a different race from dwarfs.

We will most likely meet in person when we go to the labyrinth, but having information beforehand would be appreciated.

In Mizuha, the only information we could get was that they are rare characters that are in the labyrinth.

“They are earth affiliated sprites like the dwarfs, but in terms of race, it seems like they are completely different. This is my first time hearing about them, but looks like they’re sprites that are related to dungeons.” (Tomoe) “Related to dungeons?” (Makoto)

Are they specialized in digging?

No good, the mystery is just deepening.

“Yeah. That Doma, it seems like he has taken in a good amount of them in the dungeon. But...I have never heard of him having any dependents. A size that’s smaller than dwarfs and spirits, closer to that of fairies.” (Tomoe) “That’s small.” (Makoto)

Tomoe had begun talking about the information regarding their outward appearance, and I suddenly ended up retorting.

Fairies are about 10cm to 20cm.

Are they like mascots?

The loveable characters?

“Inside the dungeon, no matter the amount of adventurers, they possess enough battle power to grab you by the balls...” (Tomoe) Eh?

“A manly yet charming beard...” (Tomoe)

“Beard?!” (Makoto)

“Is their trademark, or so I have been told.” (Tomoe)

Their body stature is that of a fairy, have unparalleled strength inside a dungeon, and their beard is their trademark?

No good, the established information is not arranging inside my head.

I feel like a notification is telling me: 'it doesn't mix, please stop trying to', as I line up the ingredients.

Right now, Marikosan is a pile of contradictions.

Is it safe to consider them dungeon spirits?

Lorel has strong religious faith in the Spirit religion which stemmed from the Goddess religion, so in that sense, this mysterious sprite called Marikosan that is common knowledge for the people of Lorel, could be considered the spirits of the labyrinth.....beard.

"Beard huh." (Makoto)

"Beard, it seems." (Tomoe)

"..."

"....."

Both of us were at a loss of words and silence came naturally.

"Ah, by the way, has Doma finished his reincarnation inside the labyrinth?" (Makoto) "I wonder. Maybe he is still inside his egg. Similar to me, he is the type that doesn't move proactively." (Tomoe) "In the past, you were quite the shut-in as well." (Makoto) "Getting involved with humans would only be a pain after all. Repeating a cycle of sleeping, dying, and reincarnating, would be a lot better than that." (Tomoe) Sleep, die, and reincarnate? Hey hey.

"Root said that he has already returned him to the labyrinth, so if he has already been born, we gotta greet him at least once." (Makoto) Yaso-Katsui seems to be his house after all.

"He is probably not the kind of dragon you imagine him to be. Not only is he gloomy, he is also a shut-in. The most useless dragon among useless dragons." (Tomoe) That's quite the way of describing him.

If he were merry and social, he wouldn't be lurking deep inside a dungeon, but that doesn't make him useless.

"Useless dragon huh." (Makoto)

If that's the standard of being useless, then I wonder what would make the dragon in front of me.

I am beginning to look forward to seeing this Doma guy.

"Waka-sama! There's a brook that looks good for a break! We are advancing as scheduled, so how about having a meal in this short rest?" (Mio) Mio pokes her head on our side and proposes a break.

As scheduled huh.

Then it might be fine to rest for a bit.

I'm getting hungry just in time, and just in case, I had Tomoe and Mio be alert for any attacks, while I also pay a bit of attention to the surroundings, so I am slightly fatigued mentally.

The Forest Oni and the Arke that entered Kannaoi first should have decided on an inn already, but if we were to increase our speed to an unnatural level and hurry to Kannaoi, the only thing we will be gaining is unnecessary attention.

Just as we planned at first, going at normal pace brings good fortune.

I do want to bring Iroha-chan safely to Kannaoi, and I don't want to trouble Sairitz-san with her strange cautiousness and consideration by arriving faster than she expects.

I don't know from where she is watching, but Sairitz-san, after seeing the power of the Kuzunoha Company and evaluating us relatively high, she wouldn't simply leave us be.

Even if it doesn't go to the point of calling it surveillance, it is probably safe to assume that she is watching us and has a rough understanding of our actions from reports.

On the surface, we are being allowed to move pretty freely, so free that there's the need to be grateful for it.

It would be a bit embarrassing to have them know about our shopping spree in Mizuha though.

“Okay then, let’s rest for a bit. If there’s water, the horse can also take a rest after all.” (Makoto) “Yes! Then I will be preparing the bento at once-desu wa.” (Mio) “Hm? What’s wrong, Iroha-chan?” (Makoto)

At the side of Mio, there’s Iroha-chan with a face as if she wanted to say something.

“...I heard a bit about you guys talking of things like Doma and Marikosan.” (Iroha) Thinking for a bit, Iroha-chan speaks out.

“Ah, yeah. We were indeed talking about those topics.” (Makoto) “Is it talk about Yaso-Katsui?” (Iroha)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

“This is something that everyone of Kannaoui knows. It seems like not that long ago, the Dragon Slayer Sofia went to the deep parts of the labyrinth and slayed Doma.” (Iroha) I know.

I heard it from Sofia herself after all.

“It seems that’s the case. I did hear about that as well.” (Makoto) “That’s why Doma shouldn’t be at the labyrinth now. And I have heard that since that day, the labyrinth has been unstable.” (Iroha) “Unstable? As in dangerous?” (Makoto)

This is information I didn’t hear in Mizuha.

“Many openings have appeared in the labyrinth, and the mamonos inside have begun to come out from them..... that’s what I think I heard the people outside my home say.” (Iroha) “Dangers of the labyrinth causing damage outside huh. It certainly does sound unstable.” (Makoto) Doma’s absence, are they going wild because their head figure has disappeared?

But if that’s the case, he is currently existing as an egg.

Are they not simply in a relationship of a dwelling and its master?

...Ah, so that’s why Iroha-chan said that thing about land survey, it was

to investigate the anomaly, maybe?

If that's really the case, she would be like a riotous Edo feudal lord.

Even though she is still so young...

"There's also rumours that the number of Marikosans have decreased-desu. I have not seen them myself, but it seems like the adventurers that gone to the deep parts have encountered them." (Iroha) Deep parts huh.

They don't appear in the shallow floors?

Then there's the chance that they really are diggers...

Who knows, maybe their weapons are pickaxes.

"Their numbers have decreased huh. The mysteries are many with those Marikosans." (Makoto) "Everyone knows about them, but no one knows them in detail." (Iroha) "I see." (Makoto)

"Things like Marikosan steam buns, and Marikosan goods are found anywhere, but if the real thing were to appear in the city, it would definitely become a big uproar-desu. That's the kind of illusory existence those Marikosan are." (Iroha) "...I see. Thanks for telling me, Iroha-chan." (Makoto)

"This much is a given-na no desu. I can see that Tomoe-sama is an incredible lady of character, but just now, I was told by Mio-sama that she is also incredible. And she said Raidou-sama is even more incredible. Anyways, she said you are an incredibly great man." (Iroha) "Mio, that girl again." (Makoto)

Planting weird things inside a kid's head.

"She said that even if there's something unbelievable happening, I can just say: 'It is Raidou-sama after all', and most things will make sense. An incredible person-na no desu." (Iroha) "Umu, Iroha learns quick. That way of thinking is completely correct." (Tomoe) "Yes-desu, Tomoe-sama!" (Iroha)

"...I do think that she is an intelligent girl, but I also think that what you are teaching her is really mistaken." (Makoto) Being only pure and

intelligent will invite misunderstandings.

“Is that so?” (Iroha)

“This is what you call humbleness, Iroha. Don’t worry, in this journey, you can just look at Waka and understand what you have perceived. You won’t be bored, I promise you that.” (Tomoe) “I am looking forward to it-na no desu! And if possible, Tomoe-sama, please show me your sword techniques as well!” (Iroha) “Of course-ja.” (Tomoe)

‘Of course-ja’, you say?

I don’t know if it is okay to have Iroha-chan accompany you in the times when you have unsheathed your sword and are swinging it.

It can’t be helped if we were attacked on our way to Kannaoi though...

...

Ah, this is not related to attacks, but there’s Iroha-chan, so we can’t return to Asora at nights.

In that case, we will be camping outside?

Even when we have such a small girl with us?

If there’s a village on our way, maybe we should stay a night.

No matter how high-class the carriage is, it is a girl that has been entrusted to us, so it would be pitiful to have her sleeping inside the carriage.

We have the promissory note, so there should be no problems.

“Ah, Mio, can you do this after the rest....” (Makoto)

Since Iroha-chan’s here, let’s find a random village beforehand and stay there.

We arrived at the brook, and I speak to Mio who is endeavouring in preparing the boxed lunches.

I also tell the same thing to Tomoe.

We let the horse rest while passing a relaxing break time.

A rare relaxing time of doing nothing.

Ah~, this kind of moments are good once in awhile~.

I was thinking like an old man.

Chapter 250: Makoto and titles

At the time Makoto's group was riding a carriage heading to the city Kannaoui that's at the vicinity of Lorel's grand labyrinth, in a far away place, at Academy Town Rotsgard, a certain pervert and genius dragon was groaning.

He –who is also a she– is the guild master, Root.

This is the deepest part of the Adventurer Guild headquarters.

A room that rather than calling it a fantasy-like alchemist workshop, it is more like a research room of a scientist.

In content, the organization called the Adventurer Guild is a place that gives numerous benefits to the people that are considered 'adventurers'.

In other words, it is a place with highly classified information.

The Adventurer Guild system that Root has constructed, right now, he himself is giving maintenance to it.

"As I thought, everything is working normally huh."

There's no problems at all.

Even though that kind of result is something to be happy about, Root's expression was not that of cheer.

"The system error that appeared when registering Makoto-kun has not affected the system as a whole...but Makoto-kun's level being 1, no matter how I think about it, this is where the problem should be..."

That's what's bothering Root.

The system error that occurred when Misumi Makoto registered as an adventurer, and the unbelievable level that came out –that is, level 1.

In the first place, the level that Root had established for the adventurers: the lowest is 1 and the strongest is 65535.

The highest value that is 65535, Root himself had set it to the same highest level as a certain old 16 bit TV game, so that's why it is like this,

and there was no other meaning in it aside from his own taste.

And since the time the Adventurer Guild was established, there hasn't been a single person who has reached this level. It is also that kind of number.

In a sense, seeing a person reaching this number or surpassing it one day has become a big objective of Root.

By the way, even if a person surpasses level 65535, the level of that adventurer will display OVER.

It doesn't return to 1 as an error.

Root had changed it that way not too long ago.

That time was the time when Root learned of Makoto, and he had doubted that maybe the level 1 was because of an error caused by surpassing the highest level.

And in reality, the power of Misumi Makoto is definitely not that of a level 1.

This guess of Root is certainly not without basis.

"Level 1 is a level that even children can surpass easily. As long as you have a bit of fighting capability, it should increase. Then why is Makoto-kun..."

There's a problem, no doubt about that.

Root has been coming to this place every now and then, and repeating trial and error as he tried to solve this mystery.

Even so, the answer has not appeared yet.

"The skills he owns are appearing as normal. He is hiding his power value, so I can't tell that part though."

Every time Root moves his gaze and moves his fingers in the air, the board shaped thing that is floating around him and letting off a faint light was changing at a bewildering speed.

Like when continuously closing the window of a PC, opening them, and

changing their size.

Numerous plates were moving busily with Root at its centre.

“His titles are also increasing well.”

The card of the adventurer guild has several functions in it that can be considered overtechnology, those functions surpass even the boundaries of the modern era.

As they increase in level and rank, these functions are unlocked one after the other, and the assistance of the guild is also proportional to the level and rank.

At first, the eyes of Makoto also sparkled when he heard of these functions, but to his regret, his level is unmovable.

Even if he wanted to increase his rank, the high-ranked requests have other conditions other than achievements, like a level condition, so he is unable to increase it.

Root immediately took this part away for the sake of Makoto, and changed the condition of strength into another one, but by the time Root had told Makoto this, he had already lost interest in things like level and rank.

With the current system, Makoto would be able to reach the highest rank while still being level 1.

Being the highest rank at level 1 would certainly stand out in a bad way.

Makoto most likely didn't do this exactly because of that.

These titles that Root spoke are set in a way so that the adventurer receives it depending on a specific achievement and can be browsed in the card, and depending on the titles, there are also benefits.

From rookie to veteran, there are titles that are easy to obtain but takes years, special genres that require the person to repeat an action several times, and there are also some that can be obtained by defeating specific races.

Of course, there's few benefits that can be obtained easily, and the

harder it is to obtain the better the benefits.

For example, the grand labyrinth that Makoto's group is heading to, if one has a title specialized in dungeons, depending on the title, they can show several times more efficiency than in normal circumstances.

Titles can be obtained no matter the level, so Makoto's actions have allowed him to obtain titles as well.

But well, the person himself isn't aware of it though.

"Aside from this one, all the others are outrageous. The first titles he obtained were [Friend of the Moon God] and [Religious disaffiliation] after all. [Miniature Archer], [Pact (Superior Dragon)], [Pact (Calamity)]...Eh?"

After that, there's [Pact (Undead King)], [Pact ()] and Root's eyes stopped at those parts.

"Undead king? It was only Undead before... Must be talking about Shiki-kun though. Hm? And there's also a blank space? I haven't heard anything about him having a pact with a new follower. Just what in the world..."

It seems like Root was bothered by a part of the title changing and that there was a new title of a newly added pact and that it is blank.

"Uwa, but the effects of both of them are incredible. It makes the [Dragon Hunter] and the [Super Wealthy] titles look weak. If an adventurer or a merchant were to obtain those high-ranked titles, they would jump in joy though."

A wry smile appeared in Root.

There's plenty of titles Makoto has that are outrageous.

Of course, their effects are extraordinary.

There's not a single one that wouldn't stand out if shown to the public, but thinking about the merits, there's a lot of them that people would set without caring about standing out.

"Well, it is Makoto-kun after all. In the first place, he even has a title like [Friend of Moon God] which I have never set up. It was probably picked up by the system when the God from that side brought Makoto-kun here.

It must be a Moon God, but it really got me there. Well, Makoto-kun himself hasn't noticed this title either which makes him out of the ordinary though."

For some reason, the effect is plain, but the ascending degree is as expected of a title involving a God.

It isn't flashy, but it is definitely strong.

The unseen parts like the increase in power and favorability of chances was incredible. That's the kind of title it is.

It is not an imaginable situation, but if Makoto were to face a tough fight without knowing of the existence of this title, Root thought that maybe he would tell him of this and gain his gratitude.

"And the one that makes me laugh no matter how many times I see it is [Owner of unconventional luck (BAD)]."

It not that he is blessed with unfortunate encounters; he is blessed with unfortunate BAD encounters.

It is specifically denoting that part, so that must be the case.

Root once again remembers Makoto.

He made a 'kukuku' laugh from the bottom of his throat, but for some reason, he suddenly stopped it.

"...Lorel. The palace of Yaso-Magatsuhi huh. Doma has not finished his reincarnation, and he has no dependents. Makoto-kun's objective is the mercenary group that was created by a gamer cripple but it is merely a shadow of its former self now, so their destination is most likely at the 20th floor underground. Yeah, even if there's the chance, I don't think that will happen. That's how it is supposed to be, but...the owner of bad unconventional luck huh. We are talking about Makoto-kun after all. But I can't go there..."

Not that long ago, Makoto had surpassed the impossible and encountered Root.

Because it was definitely impossible, Root hadn't thought of a

countermeasure.

It was like a possibility inside a possibility.

If a variety of situations are taken into consideration, the chances would easily surpass the hundred millions, or even the billions, so it was a chance that was impossible to arrive with one chance.

And the owner of such a super rare title like unconventional luck, managed to draw out the card Root had set up himself. So easily.

There's no title that shows its effects just by possessing it.

But if the person possessed the [Owner of Unconventional Luck] to begin with, there's most likely strange occurrences happening around that person's surroundings no matter the title.

The fact that he has obtained a title for it, means that everything is already too late.

A thrill-filled life is assured.

This is awful.

The Yaso-Katsui grand labyrinth, Root, who certainly called it the shrine of Yaso-Magatsuhi, silently closed his eyes.

"I don't think it is possible that you will meet the phantom of Futsu... impossible, just what am I thinking? There's no way that can happen. Now then, I gotta do something about Makoto-kun's level 1, that's why I am here after all."

The simple thought of it was stupid, so Root stopped thinking about it.

Even so...surrounded by information of Makoto, Root's expression was still clouded with no signs of clearing up.



"Oooh, the other side of the outer wall is on the level of Tsige. Part of it is because there are times when the mamonos of the labyrinth attack them, but this sight is pretty nostalgic." (Tomoe)

"As expected of a big city-desu wa ne." (Mio)

When we looked at the distance from a slightly elevated hill, a big city spread in our vision.

Just like how Mio described it, it is big.

As expected of a prominent land in a major power.

Tsige can't compare.

Tsige is limited in their terrain, so comparing wouldn't be fair though.

But it really is big, you know.

The capital of Limia and Gritonia, the old metropolis of the demon race, no matter where I compare with, it isn't as much as this one.

It might also be because it is in an open field, but it is incredible.

A magnificent view.

In my eyes, the outer walls look normal, but the inner walls are pretty tall and tough.

There's also a number of agricultural lands on the way to the city.

I can also tell from here that the water from the rivers is being drawn into the inside of the city in a systematic manner.

Ah, I see.

The Wise's knowledge in Kannaoui is most likely being utilized in those kind of parts.

It was probably because it was easier to implement compared to Mizuha because of the topography.

In Mizuha, it gave the feeling of being a parallel world city with a Japanese-like atmosphere; Kannaoui gives more of a feeling like the Japanese have placed their ideas in it, their livelihood.

Well, it doesn't change the fact that it is a mix of Japanese and Western features in a fantasy world though.

"Hoh~, I can see a lot of ideas in a variety of places that most likely stemmed from playing around and from a flexible perspective. As a whole,

the affectation in Tsige as a town is still lacking, but in this town, I can feel grace in it.” (Tomoe)

Grace, huh.

I see.

I am used to seeing those kind of places, so places like this feel nostalgic.

There’s a tall and sturdy inner wall, but from the impression that the city gives as a whole, I can’t feel any sort of enclosure.

Hah...this is a pleasant surprise.

The style of this city, or more like, the systemization of this land can serve as good reference for Tsige.

After finishing settling down with the independence, we can have Rembrandt-san and the others observe the place. It might create a pretty good reaction.

The wasteland and the labyrinth; the sensation of distance between them. There’s a bit of a difference between both places regarding that, but there’s no doubt that the development of both places were brought by the wasteland and the labyrinth respectively.

I changed my mind.

I won’t be concentrating only on the labyrinth, I will also properly check out the city itself.

“Kannaoi looks good.” (Makoto)

“Yes.” (Mio)

“Right.” (Tomoe)

Mio and Tomoe nodded.

It seems like the two have taken a liking to the city with their first look.

For now, there hasn’t been any interference of Tomoki, and he hasn’t attacked us either.

This is going really smoothly.

“...Even though we are looking at it from afar, why is it that you can understand it with such detail? That’s so mysterious-na no desu. I’m dumbfounded-na no desu.” (Iroha)

Iroha-chan, who has been silent until now, muttered this.

Oops, we were talking with our eyesight as the standard.

Since coming here, not only were my glasses unnecessary, my eyesight is better than that of the Maasai people and can see far away clearly, so it had turned into something natural for me.

Just as she said, Kannaoui is still far.

It is definitely not a distance where we would just go down and arrive at the city.

If we walk for a while, a lot of agricultural lands will be here and there, so there will be a lot of people on the road as well, but it seems like it was a bit too fast to talk fervently about the city.

I can smell food that has a scent similar to that of miso, and I am also interested in it, but...it would be better to pretend I don’t notice until I am actually close to the food huh.

“I can also smell miso-desu wa. I am looking forward to seeing what kind of way they make it, right Waka-sama?” (Mio)

Mio instantly notices and is all smiles.

“...Kannaoui is certainly in possession of miso, but I can say for sure that right now the only scent here is that of trees-desu. There’s no way that’s possible.” (Iroha)

“Well, it is Mio after all. Don’t get so bothered by it, Iroha-chan. Now then, just a bit more to go, let’s go.” (Makoto)

I urge Iroha-chan, who is making a complicated expression and an uneasy expression at the same time, to depart.

The carriage had stopped for a bit.

Even so, the sun is still high and we will probably arrive by today.

It would be better to increase the pace a bit more so that we can spend the night at an inn in the city, and that would be more comfortable.

Okay, let's go with that.

"That's right. It is the Kuzunoha Company, so this can't be helped-na no desu. I can agree to that." (Iroha)

Iroha-chan is desperately trying to agree with what's happening in front of her.

No, it is not the Kuzunoha Company but Mio...

Well, that's fine.

Anyways, from what we have checked of Shougetsu-san's group that went ahead of us, they have been attacked a number of times, but it seems like they haven't lost a single one.

They are also at a pace that won't have any problems in arriving at Kannaoi while the sun is still up.

Leaving aside mamonos, our side has been able to arrive here comfortably without being attacked by people.

Everything okay.

The first thing to do once we arrive...

"Hm?"

I stop.

My breast pocket was warm like the Cairo.

But I haven't placed anything that should be warm.

What is it then?

"The adventurer card?" (Makoto)

From the leather case I use to place my business cards, I take out the origin of the heat.

The O-parts high-spec card terminal that I received when I registered in the Adventurer Guild.

My level has not increased at all, so its functions have been sealed all this time.

Now that I think about it, I have not been using it lately.

Did it get lonely?

“It is somewhat warm.” (Makoto)

I can feel a vibration as if something inside of it is revolving.

Ah, it is that. It feels like when an outdated hard-disk is working.

It isn't as noisy, and the heat isn't that much of a deal, so there's no harm in it. It doesn't turn violent, and it is simply emitting a red phosphorescence.

But this is a first, so I am a bit uneasy.

“It doesn't seem like it is sending out magic power or transmitting anything.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe promptly analyzes and tells me that there's nothing dangerous with it.

“It is definitely Root doing something strange again. Seriously, that pervert never does anything good.” (Mio)

Root huh.

Just like Mio said, there's the possibility.

He said that he wanted to investigate the reason of the level 1 and has been tinkering with it.

The card suddenly made high-pitched sounds like when scratching a blackboard, so I stormed his place yelling and he confessed.

It is plenty possible that this is part of his tinkering.

That guy, he said that he wouldn't lie to me with a serious face, but he simply doesn't lie and has a lot of things he hides.

When I complain to him, he nonchalantly tells me that I didn't ask.

There was a time when he said in a loving manner: ‘Want me to tell you

all the things in this world that I know of? Are you letting me do that?' as if threatening me.

His male self is out of question, but now, even his female side is a no.

"It calmed down. That Root, what did he do?" (Makoto)

"Level...1..." (Iroha)

"Ah."

Iroha-chan saw my level.

It is written pretty big so she saw it huh.

"It is fine, it is fine. If we add Kuzunoha Company + Raidou-sama, it is still understandable. Yes, I am fine-na no desu." (Iroha)

Yeah, she doesn't make a ruckus, but Iroha-chan has piled up stress.

'Fine' is not an almighty word.

Iroha-chan, you are worn out.

Let's just pray for her inside my heart.

If we were to tell her that Root is the guild master of the Adventurer Guild, I feel like she will be on the verge of peeing, so this is the boundary where we should be prudent.

She hasn't asked me anyways.

...Ah, I ended up saying the same excuse as Root.

I see...

I was thinking about going tonight to enquire with that pervert about today, but let's ask him with a calm heart.

Because I have now understood a little bit the meaning behind that excuse.

"Fumu... Oi, Iroha, I will show you my card as we—" (Tomoe)

"Stop it!" (Makoto)

I stop the pointless messing around of Tomoe before it happens, and the

calm and merry journey begins once again.

Almost at the same time as the curtains of the night come down, we managed to arrive at the city of Kannaoui.

Chapter 251: Great heights of a myriad year chinese restaurant

“Are we really going to stay the night here?” (Iroha)

Iroha-chan is shocked.

No well, I am of the same sentiment though.

Even within this place where inns are located, this one is clearly on a whole different level.

Just like in Zenno at the borders, there's a really unsuitable inn for adventurers right in front of us.

If we are talking specifically how different it is from the others, it is as if this area was organized with this inn as its core.

It is not like the inn is truly at the center, but it is more like, the first one to be here was this one, and later, the surroundings developed with it.

I have seen towns developing quite a lot in Asora, so I have been able to somewhat tell this kind of things.

In other words, it is a well-established place.

Its aura is also incredible.

It is an appearance that one can't enter alone.

I heard that they had already gotten an inn, but whether it is Beren, Hokuto, or Shii, I am pretty impressed that they were able to decide on staying in this place.

I only have vague memories of it, but this outward appearance is like that of a certain main building of a famous hot spring establishment that got even bigger, and created many other buildings at its surroundings.

It is completely made of wood, and that part does feel nostalgic.

But to think they would be able to remodel it so much. Honestly speaking, it feels like that one movie where you are spirited away and Gods go there to take hot spring breaks.

“Hoh~, Shii has an eye for inns-ja na.” (Tomoe)

“Looks like a place we can relax more than in Mizuha-desu wa.” (Mio)
Seriously?

Even though I am just beginning to think a single-sized business hotel room would not be bad. I am still on the mentality that if there’s a big bath in their basement or their highest floor, I would consider it a treasure.

And yet, why is it that these inhuman two and the Forest Oni are more used to high-class inns?

In my case, at that carriage we used in our journey, I would have been able to rest comfortably with a single pillow there.

“Senjin Banrai Hanten. It is without doubt the number one inn in Kannaoui. I have never stayed in this place...” (Iroha) If I’m not mistaken, the sign says Chihiro Manrai Hanten.

Restaurant? Wait, this is a chinese restaurant?

Isn’t that where inn or ryokan is supposed to be written?

I also thought of something pointless like, why isn’t it ‘myriad customers’ instead.

“The rooms, baths, food, service that responds to what the customer wants; of course, the price comes with it as well. Anyone in Kannaoui acknowledges this as the best inn-desu.” (Iroha) “T-That much?” (Makoto)

They have a service that responds to what the customers want? What’s that, that’s scary.

Do they have concierges as well?

Maybe they have exclusive officials in the guest room?

I want to be left alone though.

But Iroha-chan nods with a serious face.

I have not spoken to Shougetsu-san about what we should do from here

on, but this girl, is it okay not to bring her back home?

For some reason, her voice is shaking, and yet, her eyes are sparkling.

She is already fully decided to stay.

Well, we do have the money.

There's no problem even if we add one kid.

If I look at the price, I will most likely have a stroke, so I won't look at it and I won't ask. I will leave the paying to someone else.

I am still not used to paying such large sums of money.

I just can't get used to that sensation.

"It is the oldest and highest class ryokan in Kannaoui that possesses several legends-na no desu. There's one legend that says a certain wealthy man wanted to see the vegetable garden that is at the 3rd underground floor of the labyrinth, and in the next day, an adventurer party escorted the wealthy man's family all the way there unscathed." (Iroha) ...

That's on a whole different level from exclusive officials in the guest room.

Well...it is obviously something that the inn arranged after the unreasonable words of the idiotic rich man, but a service that brings you all the way to the labyrinth?

Could it be, is it that?

The kind of business that doesn't say no to the customers? Do they have some sort of policy that smells 100% of unreasonableness?

The character of Lorel Union...I have to recognize it.

It smells of the Wise.

It is a way of thinking that stinks of Japanese.

The feeling as if they are putting their lives on the line for this service.

There's also the matter with Root's husband, the legendary swordsman, Iori-san, was it?

It wouldn't be any strange that Japanese people are involved in this.

But, why chinese restaurant?

What a mystery.

"I have heard that there's a secret menu only few people know of. That meal made from rice, oil, and egg is a delicacy that would make anyone that has eaten it to come here again." (Iroha) What kind of fried rice is that?

Also, isn't it the one that you can put things like roast pork fillet, lettuce, shrimps, and well, all kinds of things, and season it with salt, pepper, and soy sauce?

It's been awhile, now I kinda want to make it.

When I was in Japan, we rotated the turns and I sometimes I made it, and yet, for some reason, I have forgotten it until now.

"A delicacy huh. I see, a delicacy..." (Mio)

Mio's eyes were shining suspiciously.

Her aim is clear with a glance.

"But only that dish is not in the menu, and only the ones who know the name of it have the qualifications to order it, or so it seems-desu. Truly a legendary dish. I also like rice food, so it is something I would like to eat at least once." (Iroha) Iroha-chan goes 'Umu umu' as she nods widely.

From the corner of her mouth, I could see something shining faintly, or maybe I don't see it, yeah, I don't.

But in my mind, the only possibility this legend can be is fried rice.

This place being a chinese restaurant also feels like it is true now.

Lorel's food feels a bit different, but rice is eaten quite a lot, so a legendary dish being rice is also convincing.

Ah, if I remember correctly, in China, a chinese restaurant can refer to a hotel.

Then this can also be considered as a hotel.

“If it’s a rice delicacy, I would like to try it-ja na.” (Tomoe) Tomoe is also with the intentions of definitely eating it.

If it is her, she can just read the memories of the people at the hotel and order it. There’s no point in a secret menu with a power like that.

At this rate, Mio also won’t care about the methods and will question about the name of that dish.

No doubt about it.

Until now, the rice meals we have eaten have normally been on the low side of stickiness, so fried rice would be a bit more novel.

There’s a mysterious rule that curry, fried rice, and karaage, are, in the end, the number one most delicious food in their households.

And this is all getting so complicated.

Why is it that I am assuming it is fried rice?

No good, no good.

“Well, let’s leave aside the fried—I mean, that dish. Let’s regroup with everyone.” (Makoto) Standing here all the time thinking about strange things will make me shy when trying to enter.

Just as I thought of this and urged the three, right at our front, Beren and the other two had come out from the entrance.

Oh, so they came to receive us.

Seems like we talked way too much outside.

The three must have been tired waiting.

“Finally came out. Seriously, you guys are late in receiving us.” (Tomoe)
“Looks like you are not paying attention. How shameful.” (Mio) Eeeh.

Tomoe and Mio spit out words as if they were waiting for Beren and the others to receive us.

So the two of them were conversing here to kill time?

I was thinking we would be regrouping in the room.

“Waka-sama, Tomoe-sama, Mio-sama, we have been waiting for you!”
(Beren) Beren approaches us in small trots.

“Everyone, good work in your jobs. Sorry for having you guys search for the lodging as well.” (Makoto) “What are you saying! It has been a while since we have gone afar, we are all fired up to tackle these tasks! Please don’t mind it!! Now go ahead, go ahead!” (Beren) Oh, Beren’s enthusiasm is plenty.

Even the silent Hokuto is visibly excited.

Shii was...I don’t know where she learned it from, but she was doing the police salutation as she has a serious aura with that small body of hers.

Led by the three, we enter the extravagant hotel.

Uh...

“Welcome. Kuzunoha Company’s Raidou-sama, Tomoe-sama, Mio-sama, we have been waiting for your arrival.”

In b-both sides, there’s employees of the hotel lined up?!

My legs stop in an instant.

This overwhelming welcoming pressure. Somehow able to go against it, I resume my walk that had stopped for a moment and once again move forward.

Words with no hesitation, and a welcoming by lowering their heads.

A sight that I have only seen in TV.

When entering, the first thing I see is the wide lobby, there’s a lot of people, but it isn’t noisy. The atmosphere of the lobby, contrary to its outward appearance, is western styled. Maybe it is the result of having in mind the tourists.

It is a bit more relaxing this way.

It was a lot easier to enter than suddenly having my shoes taken off and all the floor being tatami.

The place where the front desk is located can easily be guessed by how

the employees are lined up.

They are practically saying 'that's the way'.

Understood.

Tomoe and Mio look unfazed and that's so mortifying.

It seems like Iroha-chan is also already coping with the situation.

...Well, she is a princess after all.

She is the kind of girl that when entering the bath, she will ask you to take off her clothes after all. This place might actually be more in her style than when we were riding the carriage.

Just a few moments ago, she was saying plebeian-like things, so I mistook her for a person in my side, geez.

So I am the only plebeian here huh.

I got it~.

"Welcome, Raidou-sama."

"I am Raidou of the Kuzunoha Company. We will be in your care for a while. Ehm, is there the need for any sort of procedure?" (Makoto) It seems like they have already gotten a room for us, so it is probably okay.

But I will confirm just in case.

"Your room has been registered for 10 days. Everything has been arranged already, so there's no problem. But, the...lady there, we haven't received any notification of her, so, sorry for the trouble, but I would like to ask a few things..."

A beautiful japanese dressed Onee-san asked for information of Iroha-chan in an incredibly low posture.

But she paused a bit when she saw Iroha-chan.

She probably already knows her name.

She is one of the princesses of a distinguished family in this city, so it is not that strange. But well, her asking me is probably some sort of

formality.

It is most likely the case.

Just as asked, we add detailed extra information, and finished filling out some simple documents.

(Waka, regarding the stay time, let's extend it to 1 month. We also have the matter of Iroha after all.) (Tomoe) I glance at Tomoe.

Meaning, you want to look around, right?

I think 10 days is plenty enough, but...well, if we can secure more time, it would be okay to do it.

We could use this place as a safe zone to throw Iroha-chan in if anything happens.

“Sorry but, regarding the stay time, our plans might take a bit more time, so I was thinking about extending it. Is it possible?” (Makoto) I feel like a super popular high-class hotel like this won't be able to cope with this kind of things.

If that happens, maybe we can bring her to the dungeon?

If possible, I want to avoid that.

It would be best if Shougetsu-san were to take over, but unless we talk about it first, there's no assurance.

...Even I can tell I am slightly soft with Iroha-chan.

But she is around the same age as Rinon and Komoe-chan, and she is also the fiancée of Izumo.

How to say it, it is like I just end up minding her, or more like, I end up being soft on her.

“Yes, if the Kuzunoha Company-samas are okay with staying in the current room assigned, we can arrange it.”

Oh, how unexpected.

No well, she did say ‘if we are staying in the current room assigned’.

...

Ah, it is the same as the time in Mizuha huh.

So it is like that.

“Then please change it to a 1 month stay.” (Makoto)

“...A month, is it. Understood. Then, can you please show me the promissory note you have in your possession? This is a regulation, so please cooperate in this.”

It was possible.

Or would it be more accurate to say, I ended up doing it.

Are regulations different from 10 days to 1 month?

Hotels have it rough as well huh.

I show the promissory note with Sairitz-san's mark on it.

Maybe she already knew of it beforehand, or it might be because she is a professional, the Onee-san didn't change the color of her face as she writes in what's most likely the hotel registry form like nothing happened.

“Also, regarding the staying price...”

The Onee-san that lifted her face up touches the topic of the price.

“Tomoe.” (Makoto)

Regarding matters of money, I will leave it to Tomoe.

“Yes. You have my gratitude for accepting the change on our own convenience. We will be paying the money in advance, so I would like to ask you to calculate the price.” (Tomoe) “The full amount?”

“Of course. Obviously, if there's any extra expenses, you can calculate them in the day of our departure. We are planning on heading to the labyrinth, so our stay in the hotel won't be long, but we will be in your care in this time.” (Tomoe) “In order for everyone to pass a pleasant time, all the employees will do their best.”

The Onee-san that is attending us lowers her head deeply.

At the same time, not only her, but the other Onee-san at the front desk also lower their heads, and the other people that are not attending customers also lower their heads.

“Well then, sorry for the hurry, but is it okay for my master and the others to head to the room? We want to rest the fatigue of our long journey, you see.” (Tomoe) “Oh, sorry for the lack of tact.”

For a moment, the Onee-san sends her gaze to a location where no one of our group is in.

“Please, follow me.”

Soon after, another person speaks with us.

They are going all the way to guide us huh.

Beren and the others are already staying here, so we can just have them bring us to the room though.

Well, returning to the room and being released from this tension is honestly my true feelings.

Let's just be guided.

We leave Tomoe, and after greeting the guide lightly, we ask her to show us the way.

Soon after we began walking, for some reason, Mio turned towards the direction Tomoe is.

“Tomoe-san.” (Mio)

“I know. I am sorry for requesting things one after the other, I don't mind if it's for tomorrow, but I want to ask for at least one meal.” (Tomoe) “There's no need to mind, please request of us as much as you want.”

“Umu. To tell you the truth, the Empress, Sairitz-dono, told us that there's a famous product of this hotel, you see. We would like to try out this 'fried rice'.” (Tomoe) So you already read it huh, Tomoe.

At this kind of moments, the eye contact ability of Tomoe and Mio is truly admirable.

And she nonchalantly brought out the name of Sairitz-san.

So Sairitz-san has also eaten here?

And it really was fried rice huh.

If it's Tomoe who has already read my memories, she should have already seen it before in them.

I can easily imagine her saying 'Oh, so this is fried rice huh'.

"...I will arrange it so that you will be able to enjoy it by as soon as dinner."

"You work fast-ja na. That's pleasant." (Tomoe)

"Thanks for the grateful words."

Just like the lodging price, I will try not to think about the price it takes to fill us all with fried rice.

Iroha-chan, who had a prim face from beginning to end, opened her eyes wide for a moment. Her mouth formed a smile...or so it looked, but she is desperately trying to hold it.

Just how excited are you?

Now then, what part of this building is our room?

This time for sure, we leave Tomoe and continue into the building.

...

This...I would get lost.

The map of the building at the side is practically a labyrinth.

Is this the preliminary match before challenging the grand labyrinth?

Heh~, it even has a courtyard.

...Wait, this place is not already the third floor?

In the first place, if I remember correctly, this building itself should be in a pretty high place...

It is in a location that's far away from the labyrinth, so we won't be

oppressed by that gargantuan outer wall which makes me happy.

Tsige also has a big wall, so it might be worth seeing in its own way. When there's time, I am thinking of checking it out thoroughly.

"There's a section of the hotel that was made on a slope when it was constructed. I am sure that in your stay, the scenery from the bath, and the night view from your room will please you."

As if reading my mind, I receive an explanation of the courtyard.

We walk in that yard as we are guided.

We have gone outside.

Also, a room we can enjoy the night view huh.

"Seriously?" (Makoto)

"The room is that one. Of course, from this courtyard to the room, there's strict security, so there's no need to worry about anyone suspicious. In the past, people like Sairitz-sama and Priestess-sama have been welcomed here, a room this hotel is proud of."

True.

It seems there's around 5 people as security here.

If I search with Sakai, I can also tell, but their stealth skills are high enough that if I didn't use Sakai, I wouldn't be able to.

"Now then, please go ahead. Do take your time. We will once again explain the detailed information of the room to Tomoe-sama once we see her again."

She opens the door to the room, silently places herself to the side, and waits until we enter.

She bows once and leaves.

Elegant until the end.

"To think this is the room that Sairitz-sama and the Priestess-sama have stayed in...wafuuu~" (Iroha) Ah, she didn't say -desu.

The moment it was only us, Iroha-chan mutters this in a trembling voice and falls at the entrance.

Her legs had lost strength and she leans onto the shoe rack.

“Hmmm, fried rice. I feel like I have heard that before...” (Mio) ...That Mio, I thought she was being strangely silent, but it was because her head was full of fried rice?

At any rate, even though we arrived here when the surroundings were already getting dark, they will prepare the dinner, and even hear out our request.

With only this much, I can tell that it is great service.

We have come to quite the place.

Can we really go to a dungeon while staying in such an incredible hotel?

A dark and confined dungeon.

Ah, only that part is shaving off my motivation.

Chapter 252: Interlude, even that is probably a peaceful journey (1)

Osakabe Iroha. That's my name-desu.

The Osakabe household is the head military family of the largest city in Lorel Union, Kannaoi.

But well, my household is only a branch family of the main one, so in reality, I don't have that much power.

When you become the head of the main household, your political influence is tremendous, and in times, you can even interfere in political situations, so looking at the Osakabe household as a whole, it can be said that we are a household that can enter in the top 5 even in Lorel.

Having said that, it doesn't mean that I myself will become the head of the branch family, and since the time I was born, it was already decided that I would be send off for a political marriage. Moreover, the other party is someone from the Ikusabe household that has been in an antagonizing relationship with the Osakabe household, a person of a branch family there.

They don't expect any sort of revolutionizing effect, and it is not considered an important milestone either.

If I had to put it into words, it was equal to throwing water to one of many heated stones.

Then, for what reason was I born in this city, in this family? Am I allowed to live my life without working and leeching off the tax of the people?

Without knowing the meaning of my existence, can I just be content with the standing I have been given?

In the time that I was inside the castle and my head was being constricted by questions that no answers could be found, I received a letter from my fiance, Izumo-sama.

That in itself wasn't strange. Because we have been exchanging letters regularly after all.

Even when we have no memories of having seen each other face to face, telling the other party of our current state is the duty of a fiancé and a fiancée after all.

In his childhood, Izumo-sama lived in Lorel's capital, Naoi, and right now, he is devoting himself to his studies and techniques at Rotsgard Academy.

Since the time in Naoi and Rotsgard, we have been exchanging letters, but both are far away places that make it difficult to meet in person.

It was natural we had to resort to letters.

But the contents of the last letter I received from Izumo-sama, it was something that shocked me deeply.

Until now, Izumo-sama always told me about his unchanging everyday life, and would ask about my current state, but this one was completely different...that's right, its contents could be considered a kind of confession.

To tell you the truth, since a few months ago, my life has taken a big turn.

Since the time I began taking the classes of a certain temporary teacher, the world I was looking at felt like it had changed.

At summer vacation, it wasn't because I wasn't able to return, but because time was so valuable I couldn't return.

With the incident that occurred at the Academy festival, I have been helping in the reconstruction, and have helped rebuild a variety of things.

Paths, walls, houses, public facilities; I repaired those kind of things, and seeing people use those places with a smile on their face was something that gave me great joy and happiness.

I was truly wavering about whether to tell you this or not, but I believe that I have to interact sincerely with you and reveal it.

Currently, I am at a loss in how I should live my life.

In a near future, I am thinking about creating an opportunity to personally meet you.

Being in the same place, voicing out the things we are currently thinking of, and if possible, speak our hearts out with only the two of us.

Please consider this in a positive manner.

Summarizing it, that's the contents of it.

What he refers to when he talks about the incident at the Academy festival, was the abrupt and unbelievable incident that occurred in Rotsgard Academy where people were transforming into powerful monsters.

When I learned of the place and details of this incident, I was about to lose consciousness, but Izumo-sama was safe.

Or more like, based on the information network of the Osakabe household and Lorel Union, leaving aside the results of the tournament, to my surprise, he played a heavily active role.

What I meant with 'leaving aside the results of the tournament' was that in the tournament form, he was quickly pitted against the person that had become the champion.

I heard that he put up a good fight, but he loss and the results were not that big of a deal.

But that champion, the person that became the strongest in the Academy, was a woman.

...I know that in worldwide terms, there's more strong women than there are men, but here in Lorel Union, we have one ideology that's different from the foreign countries: 'Men have to protect women'. That's why I don't want to imagine Izumo-sama losing to a woman.

I am happy for his achievements and growth, but I was in a complicated mental state.

Ah right, that's not the issue here.

In the letter of Izumo-sama, that wording about being at a loss in how to live his life, that's exactly what pierced me.

It is exactly because we have a lot of things in common that I was able to understand the true meaning of those words.

Izumo-sama has found something he wants to do.

If not, he wouldn't be at a loss.

The weight of the family, the role that our surroundings are expecting from us; the meaning and responsibility of carrying out these things has been taught to us plenty and we have grown with it.

Even so, Izumo-sama has found something that he is unable to hold back and is at a loss.

Ah.

This was completely different from my boorish question about the meaning of my existence. What an envious worry that must be.

Or maybe I was a bit jealous about Izumo-sama obtaining a type of worry that I have never been able to obtain myself.

And so, the next one, the part where he proposed for the first time to speak in person.

At the same time as I was happy, an anxiety that surpassed that feeling of happiness welled up inside me. That maybe he wanted to cancel the engagement at this time.

Of course, there was not a single mention about this, but thanks to his words 'I am at a loss', I ended up having this uneasiness.

Our marriage is a special kind, so when cancelling it, there's the need for a fitting resolve first.

There's obviously the resolve of losing all your lifestyle until now, and the resolve of being unable to live your life properly from there on.

That's why I don't think it will turn into such a heavy situation yet.

But in the possibility that Izumo-sama throws away everything as well as

me, and prioritizes his own dreams... what will be of me?

The worries I had before reading the letter were collaborating exquisitely with my current emotions.

At that time, I felt like an empty doll.

In the past, even when I was troubled in that kind of way, I could just place the expectations of the people in that empty space, and deceive myself into thinking that 'I' am needed. But this time, I couldn't make it work.

Calling it 'right in time' would be imprudent, but at that time, because of the instability of Yaso-Katsui's grand labyrinth, the mamonos began to flood outside the labyrinth and bring harm to the towns with Kannaoi at its centre.

The whereabouts of the main culprit, the Dragon Slayer Sofia, were unknown, but even if that were the case, there's no way to ignore the harm it was bringing.

Kannaoi is currently beginning to grow stormy.

The way the damage is being dealt with is poor, even in my eyes. The reason is because the head of the Osakabe household that should be standing at the front dealing with the damage, is down with a disease.

And the many factions that are aiming for the seat as the new head were trying to obtain big achievements in order to hold the supremacy, so they were obstructing and keeping each other in check which served as a big reason as to why the situation was being so poorly dealt with.

My surroundings are normally disconnected to those kinds of political disputes, but as expected, after some time, they continuously came to make demands.

I have heard that, lately, there have been radical factions aiming for my life.

It is truly stupid-desu.

Killing a low seat princess like me won't make you increase your

influence. Putting it bluntly, even if worthless princesses were to join this conflict, we wouldn't be able to do anything anyways.

The labyrinth jurisdiction is being done in cooperation with the Adventurer Guild, so it seems it hasn't turned into a problem yet, but the surrounding towns that have suffered harm from this are affecting the tax collection in Kannaoui, and it is steadily turning into a big problem.

The labyrinth is in this unstable state, and in a situation where you can clearly see from the sides that the mamonos are flowing out from the grand labyrinth, and yet, the result of the meeting between the Osakabe household and the military families of power was to make a drastic increase in tax with the pretext of resolving various problems promptly and to deal with them urgently.

I thought that this was foolish.

They should properly judge the present condition, and calculate the amount into one that won't bring any problems to their livelihood.

When I told this to the person in care of me, Shougetsu, he told me that that should be the correct way, and praised me.

But Shougetsu didn't tell this to father.

That's why I spoke with father directly, but I ended up getting scolded, telling me that: 'Children shouldn't go saying such brazen things without even knowing about the world outside'.

I don't understand.

I don't understand what part is it I am wrong about.

If they mistake the increase in tax and the towns steadily decrease because of this tyranny, what are they going to do?

If we turn it around, this would also mean that the people doing the taxing will also face a decrease in tax received.

Something like that...no matter how I think about it, it is wrong.

That's why, I decided to create proof.

I am also a living being, not a doll.

I gathered up all the money I have saved until now and can freely use, just in case, I choose a few small articles that can easily be changed to money, and bring the protection sword that has been together with me since I was born, Hotarumaru.

I decided to investigate the present condition of the neighboring towns on my own-desu.

Look at the scale of the towns and calculate the proper amount of tax; a journey for land survey.

Taking the documents that show the tax yields of the past as reference, it was all ready-na no desu.

My basic knowledge was also ready-desu.

Now that I think of it, I was truly naive. It was a childish decision that was filled with holes everywhere.

Even so, I was completely confident.

At dusk, I slipped into the darkness and left the house.

Like this, the first journey in my life –the life of Osakabe Iroha– had opened its curtains.



My journey came to a setback in just two days.

I couldn't even arrive at the first town.

At the dead of the night, within a forest that was disconnected from the main road, the swords of adventurers were pointed at me.

The funny thing is, they are adventurers I hired.

When I went to the guild to arrange both bodyguards and a carriage, kind adventurers called me on my way and I gave them a simple explanation of the situation. And then, they cordially accepted to take on the job of being the bodyguards and to arrange the carriage to the next town.

‘Adventurers are not all rude people, there are also a lot who are kind’, that’s what I thought moved, but...I was splendidly deceived.

In this situation, even if I were to do everything they say without opposing them, and I am miraculously spared my life, it would be impossible for a child like me to survive in the forest for a night.

“I was cleanly checkmated-desu...” (Iroha)

“Hmph, when you are a kid that has a good upbringing and a good head on your shoulders, they won’t plead for their life even in a situation like this?”

“...It is not a plead for my life, but there is indeed something I want to ask.” (Iroha)

“Heh~, what is it?”

“My request is not going to get in the way of anyone, on the contrary, it is something that will lead to helping others. Of course, there was no lie in the pay for your work either. And yet, what displeasure brought you to do something like this? I just can’t understand.” (Iroha)

“...Hah?”

I asked the question that was bothering me heavily inside and requested for an answer.

There’s no saving for me anyways. Then, I want to know the answer at the very least.

But the man that has his sword pointing at me, only let out a dumbfounded voice.

“As I said, why did you end up resorting to attacking your requester? That’s what I want to know-desu.” (Iroha)

“...See? An annoying brat, right?”

The man looks at his companions at the back.

“That’s true. But you know, an Ojou-sama that says so much idealistic stuff, don’t you think a ransom would be more juicy?”

“No, if the household is too high standing, the danger of us being killed is higher. Then, it would be better to just take all the possessions this girl has and profit big. It would also be harder to track us like that.”

...

Looks like there's no need to push myself to try and survive in the forest.

I will be killed by them.

Right now, I am Osaka Iroha. If I introduce myself as Osakabe Iroha, their resolve to kill me would only strengthen.

If there's no other way, I would prefer to die with dignity, by killing myself.

It would be sad to have my sword tasked to protect me, Hotarumaru, to kill myself though.

“Listen here, Iroha-sama, we are receiving an escort payment that's higher than the normal price, but you know, a kid that's able to bring out that amount of money because she wants bodyguards, must mean that she would have even more money than that, right?”

“Yes.” (Iroha)

I have to make him return me Hotarumaru.

Rather than dying by their swords, I want to die with Hotarumaru.

It would save them the pain, and I think they will probably return it to me.

“That's why, we felt like taking everything. That's the reason.”

So putting even more money than the appropriate amount didn't serve as an insurance but ended up biting me huh.

With that, their greed appeared.

So such stupid things like this, that would come out as joke stories, actually do happen huh.

“I see. Now that it has come to this, there's no technique that will allow me to oppose you. How about it, can I get my sword back?” (Iroha)

“Again? What did you say this time?”

“‘I will sportsmanly kill myself so, can I get my sword back?’, is what I am trying to say.” (Iroha)

“Hah?”

...

What’s going on?

I feel like my words are not getting through.

“...In other words, it is already hopeless, so you want to kill yourself?”

“Are you seriously saying that?”

“A kid killing herself, don’t joke around!”

They have the intentions to kill me, and yet, me killing myself is a no?

For some reason, that’s how those words felt to me.

“...It will save you the trouble—?!!!” (Iroha)

I saw as if the hand and sword of the man had disappeared.

At that moment, a sharp heat was felt in my cheek and my words were cut off reflexively.

“How is it?”

“...Tch, I was cut just now? But, even if you ask me how it is...” (Iroha)

The hand that touched my cheek had blood sticking on it.

So this is the feeling of being cut.

I already thought just a moment ago that I will be dying, so I am not that moved by it.

I think a variety of emotions have been numbed right now.

“ I see! I won’t return you your sword! I will cut you to pieces as you are now, so do try your best to maintain that calm face of yours!!”

“Don’t go shouting in a bizarre-like manner right beside someone who is comfortably sleeping! [Light Cross]!!”

Suddenly, in the darkness of the night, an intense light was spread in my whole field of vision.

Inside that light, I was held in the arms of someone.

The light weakened in only a few seconds, and disappeared, but the situation made a complete turn.

The party of three adventurers was nowhere to be found, and right in front of me, there were only two silver haired women that were carrying me.

“ ... ”

Words won't come out.

Have I been saved?

“Oi, young one, are you okay?”

“Ah, you were injured. Then use this.”

“Wait! There's no need to use that, I can heal her!”

“Ei.”

“Ah.”

After what seemed to be a conversation between the two women, a ringing of an elegant bell resounded, and.....a gentle and warm wind wrapped around me.

An incredibly comfortable, incredibly calming, and incredibly sleep-inducing wind.....

Maybe because my tension had disappeared, I fell into sleep without being able to even thank these two.



“So she is asleep now, Haku.”

“...She has fallen asleep, Bia.” (Haku)

“Haven't I told you many times to throw away that strange magic tool, Haku?” (Bia)

“I have already grown attached to it, there’s no way I can throw it away!”
(Haku)

“Activates heal and sleep as fifty-fifty, Storing of Bell. From how I see it, it is totally a cursed tool though?” (Bia)

“Actually, I don’t care about that part, but~ it is like, I haven’t found a bell that just clicks in me, or more like~ I just can’t cast aside this sound, you know~.” (Haku)

Without hearing the warning of the woman called Bia, the woman called Haku rang the bell. And then, the girl that was in Haku’s arms, fell into a sound sleep.

Haku, who was the reason for Iroha falling asleep, plays the fool and rings the bell once more, pretending to be drunk by the sound of it.

It seems like ringing it is not enough to activate the heal and sleep effect.

It would be completely troublesome if it activated every time it rang though.

“Listen here...the girl did fall asleep because of that, you know? We can’t ask her her circumstances like this.” (Bia)

While letting out a short sigh, Bia looked amazed at Haku.

“Now now, it is true that she was in a situation that we had to save her from, and things like this, you can normally guess the circumstances. Anyways, it is already late at night, so with Bia’s barrier in place, let’s go to sleep again. Let’s continue this in the morning, okay?” (Haku)

“...Hm, right. It would be foolish to get a lack of sleep when there’s already nothing to do. Let’s go to sleep.” (Bia)

“As expected of my partner, you really understand me!” (Haku)

“Yeah yeah. Well then, hurry and sleep, sleep.” (Bia)

The two women that saved Iroha from crisis, went in between the trees that were just a few steps from where Iroha was about to be killed, and from there, their figures disappeared.

They entered the barrier.

This military family princess, Iroha, who left her home and was soon to be killed, served as the trigger for the meeting of these women and her, and the results of such encounter will probably turn their future into something hard to predict.

Chapter 253: Interlude, even that is probably a peaceful journey (2)

“Homph~nom, gulp gulp...”

For a girl, she was showing quite the wild way of eating that didn't care about the eyes of her surroundings, and she is the person that is right in front of me.

One of the two adventurers that saved me that night.

Together with them, we were now in a small faraway town from Kannaoi.

Even if I say small, it is simply because I am comparing it with Kannaoi where I have been living in.

It is a place that is surrounded by an outer wall and has a higher than standard functionalities of a town.

...I don't know the name of the place though.

It has been over half a day since then, and yet, we have moved pretty far.

“You are being bad mannered, Haku.”

“I ninum geth fu eath thif momning after all.” (Haku)

...

Uhm, I think she tried to say, ‘I didn't get to eat this morning after all’.

“Seriously, you are a woman, so try to care about the gazes of the surroundings.”

“Gulp, at stage, I am properly paying mind to them, so that's fine~~.”
(Haku) “Hah...sorry, Iroha-chan.”

“Don't mind it! I have been saved by you two-na no desu. Just by letting me accompany is already saving me an incredible lot-desu!!” (Iroha) I have never seen it before, but a woman wearing a priest-like outfit threw the conversation at me.

If I remember correctly, her name is Ginebia-san.

And the other one that is immersing herself eating is Haku Mokuren-san. ハク=モクレン. The = sign is confusing me.>

She wore an exotic dancer outfit that is high in the exposure rate.

She spoke about a stage just now, so she is probably a dancer.

Both of them are probably in their twenties.

The two are older and give me the feeling that of reliability.

“Once again, I am Ginebia. Leaving aside my denomination for now, I am a bishop. Right now I am the guild’s...no, that’s not it, I am a free adventurer.” (Ginebia) “I am Haku Mokuren. Just as you see, I am a dancer. Together with Bia-Ginebia, we were travelling far away for a bit.” (Haku) Adventurers...

“I am Osaka Iroha-desu. Uhm, as I was returning home, I was betrayed by adventurers...” (Iroha) “That...” (Haku)

“Eh?”

“Is mostly a lie, right?” (Haku)

“?! ”

W-Why?

Haku-san looked at my eyes and suddenly said something like that with a smile on her face.

“You have the scent of a runaway girl coming from all over you, Iroha-chan. Also, your reactions are sometimes dull when calling you Osaka. Iroha is your real name, but Osaka is a fake one, right?” (Haku) I-It’s only been half a day, and yet, it was all exposed?!

“Since you were at that place, you definitely came out of Kannaoi, and when taking into account a name that’s close to Osaka, and a child that has the money to hire adventurers...you must be a child of the Osakabe household, right?” (Ginebia) The supplementary information of Ginebia-san is also exactly right.

...Correct-na no desu.

As I thought, my journey was destined to end in failure-desu ne.

“Ah...I...” (Iroha)

Anything I say would be pointless now.

I know that, but it seems like my mouth wanted to try saying some sort of excuse.

“And? Where was Iroha-chan trying to go that it made you run away from home?”

“Eh?”

“Tell this Onee-san, hm~~?” (Haku)

Haku-san moves aside the (many) piled up plates, and looks straight at me.

Eh? Wasn't this the pattern where I get caught, brought back, and they get a finder's fee?

Ginebia-san as well, she shrugged her shoulders a little, but looks like she intends to listen to what I have to say.

“A-Actually...” (Iroha)

And then, while nervous, I held a mysterious relief that maybe they will save me, and began telling my circumstances to the two adventurers, Ginebia and Haku.

Check the towns, investigate their actual life conditions, and have my father and the main family rethink their thoughts.

Ginebia-san and Haku-san had a gentle smile in their face from beginning to end, and listened to my story until the end.

“That's why I left my house, and decided to leave to the outside on my own, but...” (Iroha) Just as the result points, I have not been able to do anything.

“I see. It is important after all, your quest to find yourself. I understand that feeling!” (Haku) Eh? Quest to find myself?

“Haku! What are you sympathizing for?! Don’t forget that as a result, Iroha-chan almost died!” (Ginebia) “But you know, Bia, a girl that’s as reliable as her should study now, and in the future, it might bring prosperity to the country and the outside. It is true that Iroha-chan is currently naive. Naive as a kasudosu.” (Haku) I have never heard of this ‘kasudosu’.

I can somewhat tell that it is a sweet food though.

“In that case, it would be best to have a proper talk with father to—” (Iroha) “Nai~~ve!! This is serious, Bia. Her rebellious phase is on the level that she can leave home! With this naivety of yours, Iroha-chan, you won’t last long, but in this quest to find yourself, you should learn a lot of things by yourself!” (Haku) “Haku, what are you getting hyped for...” (Ginebia)

“Isn’t that fine? We are using the Spirit path to move safely, and well, we won’t be able to bring her around to towns in order, but we can at least bring her with us till Mizuha, right?” (Haku) “We are also not in a journey for fun, you know? Rokuya-san and Hitsuna are waiting for us after all.” (Ginebia) “That’s why I’m saying we will do it while we are at it. Fortunately, Iroha-chan also has money, so we can have her go to Mizuha’s Adventurer Guild and place her together with trustworthy people. If we search for an inn as well, it will be fine.” (Haku) “...Only in this kind of troublesome moments you have fast decision making.” (Ginebia) “That’s why I love you, Bia~~!!” (Haku)

“I haven’t given you the ok yet, you know!” (Ginebia)

“Heheh~” (Haku)

Seeing a comedy-like conversation unfolding right in front of me, to my surprise, it was decided that they will accompany me to Mizuha, the city that is said to be the entrance of Lorel-na no desu.

I-It has turned into something incredible-desu.

“Uhm, it is only been half a day since I met the two of you, and even though I haven’t been able to reward you with anything, why is it that you are so kind with me?” (Iroha) “In the world, there’s bad adventurers, and there’s the good adventurers as well. It is as simple as that.” (Haku)

“Aren’t you ashamed of calling yourself a good adventurer, Haku?”

(Ginebia) “But it is true! Without any reason at all, you two are doing so much for me...” (Iroha) “So you want a reason to believe us, right? Hm hm, it is nice to be young. Well, putting it bluntly, it is because that inexperience of yours was nostalgic, but...” (Haku) “Yes?”

“The thoughts that Iroha-chan currently considers as the correct way of a town, it kind of...doesn’t take proper form, I think. In that state, it will only stay as naive. That’s why, I felt like seeing a bit of that decision you will bring out.” (Haku) “...”

The decision...I will bring out?

“Search unyieldingly for your ideal, and fall; or will you obtain the ability to gently deal with the situation, and at the same time, change your very own thoughts? Or maybe, you will continue single-mindedly with that sweet idealistic thinking of yours, and still possess something that will be able to change reality in some way..... just kidding.” (Haku) “The third one is way too ominous, Haku. Don’t say things that might tempt others to make a pact with the devil.” (Ginebia) “Yes~. And so, that’s how it is, Iroha-chan. The point is, I took an interest in you.” (Haku) “...Yeah, in that point, I am also of the same sentiment. In that case, about the movements of the Osakabe household...” (Ginebia) “Rokuya-san, right?” (Haku)

“Right. I will ask her of it in thought transmission. We are in an advantage since we don’t use normal paths, but if the other side were to use teleportation to close the distance, that would be it after all.”

(Ginebia) “E-Excuse me!” (Iroha)

Within the conversation that was quickly proceeding, I had something I wanted to tell the two no matter what, so I cut into their conversation.

“What is it?” (Ginebia)

“Was the food not enough?” (Haku)

“P-Please call me Iroha without any honorifics!!” (Iroha)

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“Ginebia-san? Haku-san?” (Iroha)

The two of them fell silent and look at each other.

“Hey, Bia.”

“Right.”

“Isn’t she a cute girl? To the point that I want to bring her back to my guild.” (Haku) “Can’t do.” (Ginebia)

“I kno~w.” (Haku)

“Self-restrain.” (Ginebia)

“Well then, Iroha, it will be a short journey that will last until tomorrow morning or noon but, pleasure being with you.” (Haku) “Yeah. Also, about the matter of me opening the Spirit path we will be using now, I ask you to keep it a secret, okay Iroha?” (Ginebia) “Yes!! Understood!” (Iroha)

How reliable and amazing women.

They also have feminine charm and flexible strength.

They are calling themselves adventurers, so they must definitely be strong.

Strong, huh. How would that feel?

After that, I continued to listen to these two trusty people as I imagine a bit about my own figure fighting bravely by gracefully controlling Hotarumaru.



Spirit Path.

This unfamiliar name denotes the mysterious forest that Ginebia-san opens.

It is not a path, but a forest.

And that forest is warm, the sunlight filtering through the trees is bright, and it was a gentle forest like the ones that appear in fairy tales.

It is also a silent forest where we didn’t encounter a single mamono or

demi-human.

Spirit Path, after walking for a while in this forest, and once again opening the path with Ginebia-san humming the aria, we arrive at a far away place. A mysterious spell-desu.

It is similar to teleportation, but we are walking, so it takes more time than teleporting.

But the spell-user, Ginebia-san, doesn't seem to receive much of a burden, so this looks a lot better than teleportation.

It was truly a mysterious experience.

In the end, at noon of the next day, we arrived at the city of Mizuha.

'Bia, I am already tired. Let's just teleport until Mizuha, okay?' (Haku) 'If I teleport the three of us until there, I would be completely empty and won't be able to move for 1 whole week. Now, do you want to teleport? Hey, do you want to?' (Ginebia) 'I-I was just kidding, Bia-sa~n.' (Haku)

In the middle of the way, a conversation like that unfolded between the two.

How peaceful. It really soothed me.

One day... I want to become like the two of them, calm and unfaltering; a woman of composure. I wonder if I will be able to become like that.

I felt a bit of uneasiness towards my own future as well.

Also...Ginebia-san, even when she is supposed to be a priest, she is able to accomplish something like teleportation which surprised me too.

"This is Mizuha..." (Iroha)

I have only heard of it from word-of-mouth, the city that has the most amount of tourists in Lorel.

As the entrance of Lorel, there's a lot of traffic from various places, and as a tourist location, it is the city that has the highest scale in Lorel.

But well, in terms of tourism, the grand labyrinth in Yaso-Katsui doesn't fall so far off though.

The small information I had of Mizuha beforehand wasn't that different from the real thing. It is a place that's filled up with a variety of people.

The variety of people don't reach this level in Kannaoui, but there are a decent amount of tourist customers that come purely for sightseeing.

Also, as a whole, I feel like I see more merchants than tourists and adventurers.

Maybe they have come here to buy the unique articles of Lorel Union.

The path is wide and there's a lot of people too, and the number of carriages as well... Anyways, it is lively.

"This number of people, it is pretty numerous, right? First, let's find people we can trust in the guild, and...Bia?" (Haku) "..."

The moment Haku-san was trying to keep me company as I was overwhelmed by the energy of the city, Ginebia-san suddenly stood still and seemed to be surprised. And then, after furrowing her brows a little, I see, for the first time, an expression that let out a scary atmosphere.

Only doing a signal with her eyes, she maintains her silence and doesn't answer the words of Haku-san.

"Acha, is it a report that's not good?" (Haku)

"Report? Ah, thought transmission?" (Iroha)

"Yeah." (Haku)

"...Hmm." (Iroha)

I was told that Ginebia-san was doing thought transmission, and at the same time, she made a short sigh and turned to us again.

"Bia, did you finish the thought transmission?" (Haku)

"Haku, I have received information of that person." (Ginebia) "!! We are just about to leave Lorel, so the timing is perfect!" (Haku) "Not really. There's information that the person was seen right in the middle of a war zone. That muscle brain... they said they would be going out for a while, and thought they disappeared, but now I see this, just what's that person

thinking?” (Ginebia) “War...that means the north huh. I am not good with cold. Well, sounds like that person’s fine, and isn’t that just how master is?” (Haku) “Also, the search for Iroha...or more like, the pursuit for Iroha has begun. It seems like they are already heading for Mizuha and going full-throttle with teleportation. The information came from Rokuya-san’s line.” (Ginebia) “That’s quite the fast reaction. A little more and it would be unnatural even.” (Haku) “Seems like the Osakabe household is the place Ryoken-kun is serving.” (Ginebia) Ryoken?

Is there a person with a name like that?

One of my bodyguards, Yudoku, does give off that kind of feel though.

My other bodyguard, Akashi, if I had to define her with something, I would call her a wild boar. She doesn’t give off the feeling of a hunting dog.

“Hunti—Ah! Shougetsu-kun huh. Heh~, that person huh. He should be pretty old already, but he is still in active service huh. Won’t Bibi-chan get happy about it? If she learned that her master is still in active service and lively—Ah, Rokuya-san as well. His disciples are doing well after all.”

(Haku) Bibi, Rokuya; again, names I haven’t heard and don’t know about.

...Eh?!

The old man, Shougetsu?!

Master and...disciples?!!

“Seems like his stalking—I mean, his pursuing skills have been polished even more. Now then, this is troubling.” (Ginebia) “Right. Now that we have information of master, we are also in urgency here, and if we are heading to the north, we are also in need for preparation. Having said that, we can’t just abandon Iroha.” (Haku) “Exactly. We will guide her to the guild, and after that, we will give detailed instructions to the reception and leave the city as soon as possible. That would be the rough idea.”

(Ginebia) “Right. Iroha-chan’s search for herself and her study of society will be entering its real stage. Little girl, do your best, okay?” (Haku) “Eh? Uhm...Yes!” (Iroha)

Suddenly having the conversation thrown at me, I reflexively answer.

“...If us meeting there was destiny, suddenly separating here is also destiny. At the very least, I think that Iroha-chan is blessed with good luck. Sorry that we had to do something like leaving the job halfway.” (Haku)
“The two of you have been of great help already-desu! If there’s a time when you come to Kannaoi, please, definitely visit my family-na no desu!” (Iroha)
“In that case, we will be intruding on you with Bibi-chan and Rokuya-san. Now then, let’s hurry. To the Adventurer Guild!” (Haku)
Haku-san pulled my hand, and the two of us entered together the Adventurer Guild.

A peculiar atmosphere.

I felt like ambition and greed were mixed in the air here.

Since my first mistake, a small sense of weakness was born inside of me.

Even so, the relief of being led by these two surpassed this weakness, and I continued my steps onto the reception counter.

“What is it?”

The middle-aged male staff member looked at us with a doubtful expression that he didn’t even bother to hide.

Maybe because we are sticking out like a sore thumb.

“We want to hire bodyguards for this girl. The reward will be paid by this girl. That’s why...I want to request for trustworthy and competent people. In regards to the pay, give them a bit of an extra, okay?” (Haku) “Hah?! What are you saying all of a sudden—!!”

Haku-san immediately goes straight onto the topic.

Of course, there was no way the staff member would accept such a strange and suspicious request, but the moment I thought that, Ginebia-san does one step forward and lines to the side of Haku-san...and showed something to the man.

“We are in a hurry here too. I can ask this of you, right?” (Ginebia) “P-People from the a-apple...you are...”

“Ginebia.”

“Haku Mokuren. Just like us, don’t pry onto this girl, and I ask of you to arrange the lodging and the bodyguards. I am counting on you, okay?”
(Haku) “...Understood. Request accepted.”

!!

The request went through with what was close to an immediate reply.

What does Apple mean?

Ginebia-san, Haku-san; they are filled with mystery.

“Okay.”

“Thanks for the help.” (Iroha)

I said my thanks to the two, and both looked at me.

“And that’s how it is, so from here on, we are changing with this old man here. We will praying for your safety.” (Haku) “Me as well. We will be leaving before Shougetsu...-san arrives to this city, but we will be praying that you will be able to reconcile with him and your father.” (Ginebia) “I-I am truly grateful-desu!” (Iroha)

With a simple ‘see you’, the two left in quick pace.

“You two!!”

The staff member called Haku-san and Bia-san to a stop when they were about to leave the guild.

Stopping their feet, the two turned in silence.

“...I will prepare a coloured paper, so the next time you come, please give me your sign!”

Without answering, the two wave their hands and leave.

Sign?

So they were famous people...

“Uhm, I...my name is Osaka Iroha.” (Iroha)

“This is a request from the people of Apple, I will prepare you the best

bodyguards. How much gold do you have?Hoh, so you are not a mere kid huh. Fine, there's no problem. But..."

"..."

When I tell him the money I have left, that person nods satisfied and continues speaking.

"They will be returning tomorrow morning. People that I can soon arrange with the ones that are currently here...well, there's no assurance that some unforeseen circumstances might occur. Sorry for this but, you will have to pass one day in the lodging of this city, but...is that okay?"

"It is okay-na no desu." (Iroha)

"Alright. I will introduce you to a safe inn, and will arrange a carriage that will take you there. It goes without saying, but at the times you leave the inn, try to stay in places that have as much people as possible. Also, don't walk outside at nights. It seems like you are being chased, so I think you already know though, but just in case."

"..."

I silently nod.

When I hear the word 'night', it reminds me of that one night.

I could tell that the darkness was turning into fear and was whirling inside of me.

The current me is probably afraid of the night.

"Ah, right. Little girl! Are you registered in the Adventurer Guild?"

Maybe because I was silent with a bitter expression, the staff member suddenly said that to me in a cheerful tone.

It is obvious but, I haven't registered in the Adventurer Guild.

There's no expectations for my battle prowess, and I have heard that people register as a means to obtain an alternate identification proof, but my household name is an identification in itself.

There's a number of people hidden that are able to proof whether

someone is of the Osakabe household, and I don't think I would need an identification from the Adventurer Guild presently, or in the future.

That's why I shook my head to the sides.

"I see. There's a good amount of children that register at around your age though. In that case, how about registering today, since you are here anyways."

"Me? But things like being an adventurer and doing requests is just..."
(Iroha) "There's no need to use it. You can make it a conversation sparker, and when something happens, you can kill time by gazing at it wondering if there's any change to it. There's no demerits in having one. How about it?"

I can clearly tell that he is being considerate.

I understand that this is because the power of Ginebia-san and Haku-san's words are heavy, but it is most likely because the person himself is not a bad person.

Refusing would feel kind of bad.

Also, it doesn't seem like there's any obligation by simply registering.

Izumo-sama once said in a letter that he also registered. Right, if it can serve as a conversation starter, that in itself is useful.

"Understood. I will register." (Iroha)

"Alright! Well then, I will do the preparations, so wait for a bit. I will also arrange for the carriage. By that time, the registration should be all over... ah, in other words, we are diving straight into killing time already."

The staff member leaves into a deeper part of the guild with a relieved face.

Fuh...

After I make a single breath, the staff member returned.

I began filling the necessary spaces in the documents.

"Hoh~, what beautiful writing. Quite impressive for a person your age."

At the end, I took the level distinction paper in my hands and check for my current level.

“Level is...8 huh. I thought you were a lady from a good household but... maybe you are related to a military family? No, I won't pry into it, that was the promise. Sorry, please forget it.”

Level 8.

I don't understand well, but being able to guess that I am from a military family from this must mean that this is high for my level.

If I remember correctly, Izumo-sama is close to level hundred though...

While I was troubled by how to answer, the staff member stopped the conversation on his own and left again, and then, after a little while, he came back with a card in his hand.

Fast-desu.

If it was so easy to register, I can understand how children around my age can register as well.

“Done. This is the proof that you are an adventurer.”

Saying that, he gives me a card.

It is not something that I especially wanted, but why... I feel happy.

Silently thinking that inside of me, I was given an explanation of the card.

About levels, ranks, and even matters regarding requests and parties.

He explained it to me in an easy to understand way.

“And for the last part, there's something called titles.”

“Titles?” (Iroha)

“Depending on your actions, there's a variety of benefits. Like getting increasing attack and defense against specific demi-humans or mamonos.”

“Heh~~”

So there's a variety of things huh.

What kind of titles does Izumo-sama have?

I will try asking on the next letter.

"If you touch this part, you can see them, but well, it is a matter unrelated to you right now...no, it looks like you already have."

"Eh?! I still haven't done anything though." (Iroha)

"This is...a title I have never seen before either. [Owner of Unconventional Luck (Good)], the effect is...not bad. No, it is a vague description, but it is quite good."

Owner of unconventional luck?

It makes me happy, but at the same time, it doesn't make me happy...

I can clearly tell that it is telling me I am not normal.

But if the effects are good, well, that's fine.

"Vague?" (Iroga)

"Yeah, normal titles have pretty straight effects, like; fighting a bug mamono will increase your attack power, or give you extra damage; well, it is that kind of straight. But this one is not like that. In other words, it is a rare type of title. For now, I will set it for you."

"Ah, thanks." (Iroha)

"The effect is: 'you will be guided by a good star. Respond to your own efforts and encounters, and turn troubles and disturbances into your stepping stones. Chance will be your ally in most situations', or so it says."

"...Rather than calling it an effect, I feel like I am listening to some sort of fortune telling." (Iroha) "Right. But there's practically nothing bad written in it. I won't know the details unless I investigate further into it, but I think it is quite the rare and powerful title. Aside from particular situations, it will passively show its effects, or something like that."

It is true that the contents of it wasn't that ominous.

"Well, for argument's sake..."

“Yes?”

“There was someone with the opposite title [Owner of Unconventional Luck (Bad)], even if it is a rare title, I wouldn’t suggest to equip it. In the first place, there would be no one who would, because it would most likely bring that person to a premature death. But if we see it like that, little girl, you are (Good), so just leaving it like that will bring good practically with no conditions. It can be called a fortunate life. It might become a slightly lively and noisy life though. Hahahaha.”

Noisy life... That doesn’t make me happy-desu.

Also, the owner of strange and bad luck wouldn’t even need to set up the title, it sounds as if that person’s normal life is coated by misfortune.

It is true that I am happy because of my good luck, and that might be exactly why I was able to meet Haku-san and Ginebia-san.

...hm, that’s why I was betrayed by the adventurers I hired?

Uhm...it is probably better not to think too deeply about this title-na no desu.

“Oh, sorry for the wait, little girl. The carriage is here. I might not need to say this to an adventurer that possesses a rare title but, I wish you luck. Don’t forget to come here again tomorrow, okay?”

The staff member-san suddenly looks at my back, at the guild’s entrance.

“Yes, thanks for taking care of me.” (Iroha)

With this, I will stay in the inn for today, and then, hire trustworthy bodyguards.

With my own eyes, I will look at the real state of the towns, and with my own ears, I will listen to their voices.

I will open the eyes of father and the others.

I won’t let anyone get in my way, not even Shougetsu.

With that resolve deep in me, I ride the carriage that was prepared for me, express my gratitude to the staff member-san again, and left the

Adventurer Guild for the second time in my life.

Chapter 254: Interlude, even that is probably a peaceful journey (3)

The cold night wind brushed my cheeks, and the legs that I definitely told myself not to stop and run at full speed were now unable to properly move.

Without being able to stay even one night at the inn, I was on the verge of being captured.

By the old man that has been taking care of me since infancy, Shougetsu, and my bodyguards.

I am in a far away city that I don't have a single acquaintance to rely on. Since the very beginning, I had nowhere to run.

That's why, my only options were to slip into a crowd of people or have the Adventurer Guild give me shelter-desu.

There's way too much distance between me and the Adventurer Guild, and in order to slip into a crowd of people, I would need to head to the bustling streets.

I decided to do the latter, but the pursuit of Shougetsu and his group was fast and precise.

I was cornered into an alley that few people pass in.

But my unconventional luck still...left me with a path for salvation.

When I thought it was all over, a woman appeared gallantly in front of me.

Tall figure, blue hair waving with the wind, and with two katanas at her waist, she gazed at Shougetsu and the others in a fearless manner.

My bodyguards, Akashi and Yuduki, let out a short scream and fall to the sides of her.

Even though the two are combatants that have received a fitting amount of training for their standing, the woman that had unsheathed the long

katana had a cool expression.

She glances at me and says words that sounded as if they came out straight from fairy tales of princes and knights, and she drove away Shougetsu and the others in an instant.

“Are you hurt?”

What a lovely voice.

“Now then, little child, let’s find a safe place to—”

Her gesture of furrowing her brows slightly was also charming.

“Amazing...Amazing-desu! You were like the legendary master swordsman, Iori-na no desu!” (Iroha) That’s right, the brave man that defeated a hundred dragons alone at the borders of the world.

Like the swordsman, Iori-sama.

Possessing strong power, a strong weapon, and doesn’t forsake the weak.

“Oh, master swordsman. What a nice sounding title-ja no.”

And that daring smile she showed made me stare fascinated.

“Ah, but the old ma—no no! I mean, those hoodlums there, are they okay?” (Iroha) “Of course, I used the blunt side-ja.”

“Uwaaa~~”

Without killing a single one of them, and not boasting about it.

Just like Haku-san and Ginebia-san, this personage has gained my admiration.

Maybe because she is a swordsman that uses a katana, I could tell that my admiration grew greater.

“Chasing after a child in group, that’s not something that would normally happen. This must be some sort of destiny-ja, if it is okay with you, can you tell me your story? I am Tomoe. A person that has a decent amount of skills-ja yo.” (Tomoe) “Yes!!”

“What an honest girl-ja na. What’s your name?” (Tomoe)

“Iroha, and...Osaka...Osaka Iroha is my name, Tomoe-sama!” (Iroha)

“Osaka huh. Fumu, well, that’s fine. Then, Iroha, let me introduce them. The one you see there is my master, Raidou, and the one over there is our servant, Mio-ja.” (Tomoe) At the place where Tomoe-sama turns to, there’s the figure of two people.

One of them is a man of low height, and other one...it is a bit dark so I can’t tell the details well, but it is probably a woman dressed in a kimono and has black hair.

The short one is Tomoe-sama’s master?

It doesn’t click though.

That person held his head as if troubled and tells something to Tomoe-sama and the other woman, and then, turns to where I am.

“Before hearing your story, let’s first go to a calm place. Iroha, come to our inn. That way will be safer, and we can protect you.” (Tomoe) “The inn of Tomoe-sama...” (Iroha)

It is true that the inn the guild introduced to me was instantly found by Shougetsu, also if something were to happen before reaching morning, I will get caught for sure.

If it’s those skills of Tomoe-sama, as long as I am together with them, no matter who attacks us...

“Looks like you don’t have any objections-ja na. Then, follow us.” (Tomoe) “Ah, yes!” (Iroha)

This encounter...is it also because of my luck?

Being together with these three, is there some sort of meaning behind it? Will they help me find that special something?

Anyways, I don’t have any other choice.

Right now, I should go with the flow.

...

At any rate, walking alone and walking together with someone is so

different. I feel incredibly safe.

The master that hasn't turned his face at me much, seems like he is being considerate with me, his walking pace is pretty slow.

The two tall women were frequently talking with him, and his way of responding to them is incredibly natural, it felt like a space that was already well-formed.

From the pieces of conversation I could pick, it gave me the impression that this person called Raidou knows quite a lot about this country's culture.

But how to say it, it felt like it was old knowledge, or more like, not of the modern era. That mysterious knowledge felt strangely disjointed at some parts.

Hm, isn't that...

Something was bothering me.

But that threw me into a much bigger question.

The eyes of wonder that were being poured at us—no, not at me, the gazes that were being poured at Raidou-sama who is being courted by the two women.

I can clearly understand the reason, or more like, I am also questioning it myself.

Just what part of this person attracts Tomoe-sama and the other girl to him?

I don't understand at all.

His appearance is on the low side, and he is not equipped with anything amazing. More like, he is not even armed with anything.

Also, contrary to Tomoe-sama who exudes the aura of a strong person, I don't feel anything at all from this man.

There's practically no magic power.

I don't think his conversation skills are that much to praise, and...there's

not a single trait that would attract the opposite sex.

Why?

...Ah, I thought of a reason.

He might be the same as me.

His pedigree is good. Or maybe he is rich.

Not his name or his individual traits, his standing is the amazing part.

If there's any appeal in this man called Raidou, it would definitely be on those lines.

But...would a great person like Tomoe-sama be attracted by such a lowly reason as that?

The woman called Mio apparently is a servant, so it is possible that she is trying to get on the good side of her master and obtaining favours that way though.

Even so, looking at it in the standards of Lorel, these two are quite the beauties.

Their ambitions should also be on the higher specs too.

As I thought...I don't understand at all.

While I was thinking this, we arrive at the inn they are staying in, and was allowed in.

It is a pretty good room-na no desu.

As I thought, this Raidou is quite the wealthy man.

Looks like my guess was correct.

And he is the representative of a foreign company called Kuzunoha Company and they are the top brass.

To my surprise, they revealed that they have obtained the permission of Sairitz-sama and are visiting this country.

The many questions that I had in my mind were heartily answered, and the representative of the Kuzunoha Company, Raidou-sama, was, contrary

to his appearance, a really gently person.

And, it seems like my impression of Mio-sama was...a big miss.

I went through a terrible experience I don't want to remember.

"I-I...!!"

Since there's the chance that Mio-sama is in the same rank as Tomoe-sama, I can't ask her to help me with my clothes.

As it was inevitable, the moment we were to enter the bath in the room, I asked Raidou-sama to assist me.

He seemed to be surprised, but if it's Raidou-sama who is the same ordinary person like me with only his family being the imposing part, it would make me feel slightly at ease, though it might be a bit rude to him.

Asking this to super women that can cut through destiny with their own strength and at times affect the future of others, that would be outrageous.

It would be another story if it is when I have become woman-like, but with this pitiful looking body of mine I have now, that's just...

Even Raidou-sama probably didn't find anything good about it.

It has been a while since I haven't taken a bath, so I ended up being a bit too merry, but that man was easily coming in contact with Tomoe-sama and Mio-sama, so maybe he is unexpectedly used to the body of women.

Even so, I truly felt that I am a princess.

With only a few days of not bathing, I couldn't take this unpleasant feeling on my body.

I can't believe that having sweat remain on my body was so unpleasant.

Polishing my skin as long as I want to in the bath can bring my spirit up this much.

Even though commoners wouldn't have the chance to bath everyday.

While in the bath, I couldn't contain it any longer and ended up swimming inside the bath even if it that was improper.

And my mind suddenly thought of something, that no matter how close 'we' get to the 'people'...we probably will never be able to intersect.



The next day.

At the traditional clothes store oriented towards tourists, after being shown a part of the overwhelming assets of the Kuzunoha Company, I asked Raidou-sama to let me drop by the Adventurer Guild, and I asked the receptionist that I will be cancelling my request.

I told them that it was because I have found reliable people myself.

And in truth, I have told Raidou-sama and the others as much as I could of my circumstances and they have promised to assist me.

But for some reason, there's been no contact with Shougetsu and the others today.

The old man wouldn't give up with only that one time last night. How strange.

The Kuzunoha Company also doesn't seem to mind at all about the attack of the old man's group. This is also strange.

But this was not a big deal at all-desu.

When we were departing from Mizuha, most of the troops garrisoned at the city were lined up to see off the departure of the Kuzunoha Company.

The carriage was a splendid one like the ones big aristocrats use, and the horse was of a first-class breed.

...It seems like it was a gesture from the city.

Raidou-sama said he would definitely return them and was sorry for the trouble, but...honestly speaking, this 'gesture' of theirs was definitely not of lending but of gifting.

This was, without doubt, not the behaviour they would have over a normal company.

"I am someone that simple ended up accompanying them because of a

course of events but, just what are the people of the Kuzunoha Company?” (Iroha) I spontaneously asked a person with good standing.

Even for myself, that was a suspicious manner of speaking.

“...I don’t know any more than you who is accompanying them, but if you really don’t know, just have Raidou-sama show you his promissory note.”

“Promissory note... Thanks.” (Iroha)

“...Don’t mind it. Please give my regards to Shougetsu-sama, Iroha-sama.”

“!!!”

“Please rest at ease. Shougetsu-sama and the others won’t be getting in your journey’s way any longer.”

“...T-Then...” (Iroha)

W-What a surprise-desu.

I simply tried talking with what seemed to be an important person within the troops, and yet, that old man...he is unexpectedly a famous person-na no desu.

He was able to locate me easily too.

I feel like things are moving in a place I don’t know of.

“Ah, Iroha-chan, you said you wanted to go to as many villages along the way as possible, right?” (Raidou) Raidou-sama asks to confirm with me who had already gotten in the carriage.

That’s right-na no desu.

I want to look at the current state of the villages, and confirm if the tax of this year is reasonable.

“Yes. Of course, it is plenty enough to have Raidou-sama and the others accommodate what’s possible so that it doesn’t affect your journey’s plan.” (Iroha) “That’s fine. But you said you wanted to do land survey, how are you planning on doing that? We won’t be able to stay too long in one

village, you know.” (Raidou) “I don’t think it will take much time-desu.” (Iroha)

“Eh?” (Raidou)

Raidou-sama makes a puzzled expression.

“I know the details of the tax from last year, and as long as I am able to confirm the harvest of this year and the state of the damage caused by the mamonos to the villages, that would be enough. Also, if I could tell the situation with the population, that would be plenty.” (Iroha) “...Harvest and damage, also, population. I feel like those things take time...” (Raidou) Raidou-sama tilts his head.

Fufufu, he probably doesn’t know this kind of things in detail.

If it’s those three points, the village chief has a grasp of them all.

That’s why things will be wrapped up by just hearing out the village chief.

“No, it is only listening to what the village chief has to say, Raidou-sama.” (Iroha) “Eh? Doesn’t that mean...” (Raidou)

“Their duty is to report this information to the feudal lord every year after all. Looking at the village in person, and listening to what they have to say will let me understand more precisely-desu.” (Iroha) “...I see. That’s how it is... Understood. We will go to as many as possible. Right, being inside the carriage will probably be boring, so how about going to the coachman side with Mio and check out the scenery?” (Raidou) After showing a surprised expression, Raidou-sama looks as if pensive and stayed silent for a while, then he encouraged me to go to the coachman side.

“But I can’t drive a carriage.” (Iroha)

I haven’t had those kind of chances until now, and I have no skills in controlling horses.

“It is fine. It is not like you will be going there to work. Didn’t I tell you? Go check out the scenery. The horse...well, just look forward to it.”

(Raidou) ...

Well, if that's what Raidou-sama says...

"Understood. Then, I will take you up on your words-desu." (Iroha)

"Okay, have a good time." (Raidou)

In the dim and cool passenger car, I left Tomoe-sama and Raidou-sama, and move to the coachman side.

There, I saw the figure of Mio-sama sitting there with elegance.

In her hand she is holding her folding fan, and at times, she is sending wind to her face.

Her other hand is left at her waist.

She doesn't seem to mind the horses at all.

"Ara, Iroha. You are coming to this side-desu no?" (Mio)

"Raidou-sama told me to check the scenery at the coachman side."

(Iroha) "Waka-sama did. How kind of him." (Mio)

Mio-sama narrows her eyes happily and her mood goes merry.

"U-Uhm, is it okay to not mind the horses?" (Iroha)

"...No problem-desu wa." (Mio)

"But if we let the horses do as they please, not only will we not arrive at Kannaoi, we won't even know where we will be heading to." (Iroha)

"These little ones will go at their properly thought up routes and bring us to Kannaoi. No need to worry. The villages Iroha wants, and the locations with water; they have all been told properly." (Mio) "Told...properly?"

(Iroha)

By who?

Could it be...to the horses?

"Ahaha, that's impossible." (Iroha)

"What's impossible of that? It wasn't me you know? It was Waka-sama-desu." (Mio) Raidou-sama did?

Ah, I see.

...

Like hell it is!!

It is not a problem about whether Tomoe-sama, Mio-sama, or Raidou-sama did it!!

“You are a girl with an unexpectedly rich amount of expressions huh. You seemed like you were having quite a lot of fun in last night’s bath as well.” (Mio) “That was, uhm, it had been a while since I took a bath, so I was a bit uhm...wait, that’s not the issue here! You have to properly hold the reins of the horses or—!” (Iroha) “Or?” (Mio)

“They will move willfully!” (Iroha)

“Are they moving...willfully?” (Mio)

Eh?

When she says that, I look at the front again.

The horses were moving in a way that discipline could be felt and advancing rhythmically.

That advance felt like they properly had a goal in mind.

Even though no one is holding the reins...

“They are moving properly...” (Iroha)

“Right?” (Mio)

Mio-sama answers as if that was obvious.

“Raidou-sama...can speak with horses? Is he able to do something like that?” (Iroha) “Yeah. It is Waka-sama, so that’s a given. Iroha, you are misunderstanding Waka-sama, aren’t you?” (Mio) The eyes of Mio-sama got a bit scary.

“U-Uhm...” (Iroha)

“You are thinking of him as a simple wealthy man of a mercantile house, aren’t you?” (Mio) “Uh...” (Iroha)

Bullseye.

“Seriously, believing only what your eyes can see is truly pitiful. Listen well, first of all, Waka-sama was able to obtain this fortune in his own lifetime.” (Mio) “Eh?”

But...you know, isn't he a Waka-sama?

He would have to at least be a second generation or that would be strange... right?

“He is a person that earns more than he can make storages for, you know. By the way, he is also a person that is able to obtain the many raw materials in the border of the world and has a circulation of it in Tsige. At the same time, he is a person that has influence on the authorities of all four major powers, as well as being the strongest in Rotsgard as a temporary teacher.” (Mio) “...”

“The incident that occurred in Rotsgard, if Waka-sama was not there, who knows what would have happened. It wouldn't have been strange to have a notice of Academy Town's destruction-desu wa.” (Mio) Mio-sama talks indifferently.

The contents are not entering me well.

“Hah...now you are playing the idiot. Hm, this is good timing-desu wa ne. Look there, Iroha.” (Mio) As the carriage was advancing on the path in the forest, Mio-sama looks at the front and says that this was good timing.

The many shocking words still hadn't been digested inside of me, so I just followed the words reflexively.

“?!”

There's a cliff right at our front. It is pretty big.

A profound crevice at the ground.

I thought that my line of vision had gotten bright suddenly, but to think this was the reason...

Left or right; whichever it is, we have to circumvent it.

But what part of this is good timing?

At that moment, one of the horses makes a long neigh.

“Yes, understood.” (Raidou)

From the passenger car, I heard the voice of Raidou-sama.

Understood?

I don’t understand the meaning at all.

But it seems the horses understood it, they looked satisfied and continued onward.

T-There’s a cliff-desu!

At the! Direction we are headed to!

There’s no bridge or anything, only a deep cliff!!

The horses had no fear at all, and Mio-sama didn’t mind at all as if this was natural.

“Mio-sama?! Front, front!” (Iroha)

“Yeah, watch well.” (Mio)

“...”

Watch, you say? I can see the cliff.

That’s the only thing I can see...-na no...desu...

Both ends of the cliff begin to adhere to each other.

Both ends moved as if creating a path in the line we are advancing at.

The light of magic power can be dimly seen on the ground there, but I can’t feel magic power at all.

In the time I blinked, there was a path there, and at both sides, there were supports for it. Guardrails of stone were made...and turned the path into a bridge.

A pretty sturdy-looking bridge.

Without me noticing, the surface of the ground had changed into stone

pavings.

“I heard that he was helping out in the reconstruction of Rotsgard, but this is a splendid work. A magnificent bridge-desu wa ne.” (Mio) The horses were traversing that stone bridge as if nothing happened, and after advancing for a while, this time, the horses made a slightly scared cry.

Did something happen?

The uneasiness of the horses transmitted to me as well, and my chest felt slightly cold.

“There’s a place with water close... time for a break huh. But, I see...it seems like there’s undead coming out from the surroundings.” (Mio)

“Undead! Mio-sama can tell?” (Iroha)

Things like skeletons, ghosts, zombies; that’s the kind of monsters undeads are.

I have not seen them before, but I had the knowledge of it.

“Isn’t that obvious? The stench of undead reaches all the way here after all.” (Mio) “Mio...the horses are scared, but if it’s a pain, want me to do it?” (Raidou) “No, Waka-sama! Something like this, I can clean it up.” (Mio)

“I see. Then, I leave it to you!” (Raidou)

“Yes!” (Mio)

“While at it, can you open a path that can serve as a shortcut to the water place? It seems like it would be quite the roundabout way if we didn’t do that after all. Looks like the horses are also tired.” (Raidou)

“Leave it to me. Ei.” (Mio)

‘Ei’, you say, Mio-sama?

What are you going to do by making such a cute sound?

Also, you say ‘leave it to me’ with a gleeful expression as if flowers were to sprout in your vicinity, and that ‘Ei’ as weeelll—?!!

A pitch dark pillar suddenly appeared and swirls around to the point it

felt like it could reach the sky.

“Iroha, did you become a goldfish or something? Your mouth is opening and closing. If you are a lady, be careful with your gestures. And so...the water place is over there and the current path is like that, so...if we make way in this line, it would be a shortcut?” (Mio) When I was surprised with no words to say, Mio-sama cautioned me.

I couldn't even respond anymore. The place where Mio-sama pointed her folding fan at, there, the trees that were lined up, were being swallowed by a darkness creeping on the ground...and disappeared.

At the other side of the darkness carpet, there was a lake that was sparkling with the light of the sun.

It is probably the water place that they have been talking about for a while now. Yeah.

The horses changed their route, and were joyfully heading to where there's the presence of water, to the lake.

That darkness pillar probably defeated the undeads, and then, it opened a shortcut to the lake just like this.

Even though it hasn't been long since we departed from Mizuha, I felt like I had lived several days of journey already. That's the kind of fatigue I was feeling right now.

“ ... ”

“So you are speechless. Well, did this serve as good seasoning and bleaching? Iroha, from now on, until we arrive at Kannaoi, we will be showing you a lot of the Kuzunoha Company, Waka-sama, and us. Learn. In the future, you will hear the name of the Kuzunoha Company and Waka-sama, and at that time, I hope you will be able to make the correct judgment. Tomoe-san and I won't be frugal in cooperating with that. Ufufufu.” (Mio) I have already been shown how a bridge was made in an instant on a cliff, and how they easily create a path in a forest, and yet, there's more?

...

I will just empty my head.

I will just honestly get surprised and moved as it happens.

Might as well just be simply Iroha, and not Osakabe Iroha.

I will learn of these group of great people.

This is the time to show your resolve, Iroha.



Since the very first day Raidou-sama and the others left the city, along the journey, things that I would have never imagined, were occurring, and occurring, and occurring a hell lot.

Is this the doing of that strange title that the staff member of the Adventurer Guild set up?

Before arriving at the villages to hear them out, a good amount of problems happened, no no, at this point in time, I can already say clearly that those can't be considered problems at all.

Attacks of monsters, a dispute between demi-humans and a village, and then there was a mountain fire and a flood; those kind of obstacles that would even change the topography...there have been so many, I can't even remember which one occurred where. Even though it has only been a few days, I can't remember anything in detail anymore.

The word count in my notebook has surpassed any instance.

This notebook, that I was originally planning on using to arrange the talks of the village chiefs from every village, proved useful in an unexpected way.

Of course, this notebook currently lying on my thighs also has the present condition of the villages.

It was practically all thanks to the Kuzunoha Company, but it is proceeding in an unbelievably smooth manner.

"As I thought, all the villages are in a bad state. If we were to increase the tax in this state, in just a few years, it might create irreparable harm."

(Iroha) Even if I look at their current state, there's not much bright things to say about the villages.

For some reason, in the timing that we arrived at the villages, big problems grew active, but in those cases, Raidou-sama's group settled them all.

Even so, settling those big problems only served as small plusses that didn't solve the root of anything.

"But if I show this to father, he will definitely—!" (Iroha)

"Hey there, Iroha-chan. Are you not going to sleep yet?" (Raidou)

"...Raidou-sama. It is night, but you have prepared a light for me, so sleeping right away would be a waste-desu." (Iroha) "...Lack of sleep is not good for children though. It might have been a mistake to prepare a light." (Raidou) As if troubled, Raidou-sama kneads his temples.

"That's not true! It makes me incredibly happy!!" (Iroha)

In the first place, when sleeping outdoors, the most you can have normally is the light of a fire, but Raidou-sama and the others don't have any fear of things like beasts and mamonos, so even the fire is extinguished and they prepare their own lights as they pass their nighttime.

When I asked for a light to continue my writing, Raidou-sama easily lighted up a lantern with the light of his magic power, and I have been using it all this time till today.

It lights up on its own when it gets dark, and extinguishes on its own when it is day; a kind light-desu.

The night has already deepened, and yet, it still continues to release a calming light.

"Haha, I see. It must be that, right? In the villages we went to, a lot of things happened and we involved ourselves with it and even meddled in their business. This lantern that I have given to Iroha-chan can be considered a part of this meddling, right? And so, how was your

impression after checking the villages?” (Raidou) “...Not good-desu. As I thought, a tax increase is not something that should be done at this time.” (Iroha) “From the information you picked up, that’s what you thought?” (Raidou) “Yes.” (Iroha)

“Then, what did you think...after seeing the actual people of the village, the problems that each village had, the attacks they received, and their behavior in crisis?” (Raidou) “Eh?” (Iroha)

Instead of saying Raidou-sama wanted an answer, it was more like, he wanted to know about my thoughts of it.

Even if you ask me what I think...

“The people at the villages were incredibly troubled-desu. It was great that Raidou-sama’s group was coincidentally there when things happened, but if that wasn’t the case, a number of villages would have definitely fallen.” (Iroha) About that, I felt like it was the fault of my title, and that made me feel even worse.

“...About that, well, it might be because of me, so I ended up saving them though.” (Raidou) “Eh?”

“Ah, well... I see, ‘troubled’, that’s all huh. Iroha-chan is really kind. I am even beginning to think that ‘comparing our answers’ will be a bit cruel.” (Raidou) “Comparing answers?” (Iroha)

Raidou-sama is the type of person that no matter what kind of out-of-standard things he says, it wouldn’t be strange, but what is this about ‘comparing answers’?

I don’t understand more than normal-na no desu.

At times, from Raidou-sama’s hand, a line of light is shot and flies somewhere. And I have become able to understand that ‘Aah, there was a mamono in our vicinities huh’.

When I asked him what he was doing, he told me he was practicing his magic, but that’s definitely him lying.

Everytime that happened, Mio-sama directed cold eyes towards the

direction it flew to, so it was obvious.

And in reality, there hasn't been a single attack of anything since our journey in this carriage.

A poisonous valley turns into a field of flowers, bridges are made at cliffs, forests turn into paths; in a sense, this felt more of a cheat-like journey than the Spirit Path of Ginebia-san.

Thinking about the villages we have gone to, it would normally take around 1 month.

"Let's leave it as something to look forward to when arriving at Kannaoui. It won't take that long after all." (Raidou) "As I thought, Raidou-sama is really a Wise-sama-na no desu. The moment I saw the promissory note, more than being surprised, I felt like I could comprehend. A mysterious and amazing person-desu." (Iroha) "...Wise huh. I just can't get used to that way of calling. Also, the Japanese that were here were mostly fooling around, and frankly speaking, being placed in the same category as them would make me so embarrassed I wouldn't be able to walk outside." (Raidou) "Aren't you happy about the numerous great achievements that they have left behind?" (Iroha) "I know about a number of bright achievements, but...you see, even with those there, when I look at the practice uniforms being bloomers limited to only women, my respect is blown away to the stratosphere. It seems like there were quite a lot of Japanese from the Heisei era, and yet, why are short pants not good?" (Raidou) "They are incredibly good, those bloomers. Is that something that would make you lose so much respect?" (Iroha) I can somewhat imagine what 'short pants' are, because of the wording, but I don't think that would be something that would influence one's impression of the achievements the Wise-sama have left behind...

"I thought it was a ditch that will never be filled up. Period." (Raidou) With a serious face, Raidou-sama mutters as if groaning.

"...And so, what is it that Raidou-sama wanted to say? If you want me to quickly go to sleep, I will go and sleep for today." (Iroha) "Ah, that's not it. I was just speaking with the horses, you see. And so, since I had the

chance, I called out to Iroha-chan who was still awake, that's all." (Raidou)
"...Now that I think about it, I have never heard stories of Wise-samas that are able to speak with animals. Or more like, Raidou-sama is not only able to speak with animals, you even spoke with demi-humans, mamonos, spirits of dead people...weren't you? No, if that was just my misunderstanding, that would be a relief-no, I mean, that would be fine."
(Iroha) "Actually, I can." (Raidou)

"You can?" (Iroha)

"Yeah."

"That's an impressive ability. Admirable-desu." (Iroha)

Being able to speak with anyone in this world, if that's true, it is an incredible ability.

And we are talking about Raidou-sama, so it is most likely true-na no desu.

"If possible, keep it a secret along with the things regarding the Kuzunoha Company, okay? I am not forbidding you from telling anyone, so just think of it as a promise between friends." (Raidou) "Friends..."
(Iroha)

It is a word I am not used to.

I think a promise between friends is quite heavy.

If Raidou-sama is my friend, there would be nothing as reassuring than that.

I now understand that me saying something like 'we are friends' would be presumptuous, but as expected, I can't have Raidou-sama...assist me in my bathing anymore.

In my standards, he is the number one person I shouldn't have asked to do that.

In this journey, I have learned how to change clothes myself anyways.

"By the way, lately, I have been able to kind of understand things like trees and stones. Haha, after all this time, this really does trouble me."

(Raidou) "Trees and stones..." (Iroha)

Being able to understand the wills of trees and stones...I feel like there's no need for it to be a living being anymore.

"Ah, right. Since I have the chance, let me ask you one thing." (Raidou)
Raidou-sama who has confessed something outrageous, acted normally without any changes and looks straight at my face.

"...If it is something I can answer..." (Iroha)

Might as well just reveal that I am from the Osakabe household.

"It isn't something to be so tormented about, you know. Uhm, you see..."
(Raidou) "Yes?!" (Iroha)

"Is Iroha-chan...the fiancée of Izumo?" (Raidou)

.....

...

Izu...mo?

"There's not even the need of hearing the answer, it was a bullseye huh. Mio also said this but, it shows in your face, Iroha-chan. You are like my past self...no, I am still the same as well." (Raidou) "R-Ra-Raidou-sama?"
(Iroha)

Why is the name of Izumo-sama coming from Raidou-sama?!

"Actually, it is something that I was practically sure of though. Simply confirming." (Raidou) "Uhm... I... uhhh...." (Iroha)

"It is fine. I am not blaming you or anything." (Raidou)

"...Why?! Why do you know?!" (Iroha)

"Ah, so you go for that. You have probably already heard from Tomoe or Mio but, I am a temporary teacher in Rotsgard. To tell you the truth, I am teaching Izumo practical skills." (Raidou) "?! Could it be... you are..."
(Iroha)

"Hm?"

“With a cool face, he toys around with his students at death’s door, trains them without forgiving them and without letting them die...”
(Iroha) “...”

“He would change his behaviour whether the person is male or female, but in the end, what he is doing doesn’t change at all. In a sense, he is an incredibly fair merchant-or more like, an ogre wearing the skin of a merchant.” (Iroha) “...”

“‘Just knowing him would cause goosebumps, so I will not mention his name’, are you that temporary teacher?!” (Iroha) The face of Raidou-sama is stiffened.

But I most likely- no, I definitely have a stiffened face too.

“...Seriously, that Izumo does say some troublesome things huh. Ahahaha...” (Raidou) “Really. Even though you are such a kind person. Geez, that Izumo. Fufufu.” (Iroha) I don’t think I can do it, but I tried to somehow smooth over the situation.

At any rate, Raidou-sama, and the Kuzunoha Company.

A merchant, a Wise-sama, and on top of that, he is the teacher of Izumo-sama.

This meeting was most likely the guidance of the Spirits.

The Priestess-sama has been outside the country lately, so the words of Spirits have grown scarce, or so I have heard.

But there’s no doubt about it.

Is this because of the antagonism between the Ikusabe and the Osakabe households? Or maybe because of their consideration regarding the instability of the grand labyrinth in Kannaoi?

This is...it has become quite the major incident.

I have probably been appointed as the person who will witness... what this personage and the Kuzunoha Company will achieve in Kannaoi.

This is not the time to be surprised by small things.

My homeland, Kannaoui, is something going to happen there?

I, Osakabe Iroha, will properly witness this with both of my eyes.

Chapter 255: Beren's report

There's a garden, and we were guided to the shed there.

Even if the hotel is big, it is still strange to have a shed at the third floor of a hotel, and on top of that, there's a garden.

From the window of the room there, I could appreciate the pseudo-japanese garden.

No well, it does feel strange to have palm trees and several colorful fruits constantly changing colors, but I think this enters into the category of a japanese garden.

I don't have much knowledge about gardens after all.

I am simply feeling like: what the hell is this?

The inside of the house is tiled and the rooms were covered in tatami mats.

It may be a mix of japanese and european style, but it is a bit more relaxing this way.

Probably because my house felt similar to this.

Nevertheless...there's 4 rooms and the passage is wide enough for two people to walk side by side.

How fearsome is Chihiro Man Rai restaurant.

"Now now, Waka-sama, over here."

After checking out the rooms and the garden, Beren guides me again.

Well, even if I say guide, he simply led me to the room where I saw the garden, and made me seat at the seat of honor.

Around the square table, there's a number of floor cushions.

This is something I see for the first time in this world as well, but for me, it is a fresh view.

It is been awhile since I have seen a room without chairs.

When I sit, Mio beckons Iroha-chan and both of them sit as well.

I did suggest Beren to take a seat too, but he stayed standing.

‘It would be outrageous to sit before Tomoe-sama comes’, apparently.

The Forest Oni, Shii, in a terrible twist of fate, respects Eris and is mimicking a lot of her speech and conduct, but in this kind of situations, she hasn’t been able to completely mimic her.

At her roots, Shii is a serious and athletic type of girl, so she hasn’t taken a sit either.

If it were Eris, she would have the guest Iroha-chan sit, and while at it, she would also sit as well, no doubt about it.

Seems like Akua and Eris are pretty admired by their juniors, but the athletic type ones, no matter if male or female, are easily attracted to Akua’s side, but for some reason, Shii is one of the worst cases.

Her way of fighting is one that’s rare in Forest Onis, close range combat, and she is the power type that swings around a metal rod that doesn’t match her small stature.

In this part as well, she is not similar to Akua and Eris.

Hokuto who is at her side, is one of the 4 Arkes.

He is a serious person and likes fights.

We don’t interact much, but I heard from Tomoe that he likes ninjas.

His looks are that of a big man of good build, and yet, he has a technical battle style using strings.

The reason these two were chosen to accompany us this time was because, from Tomoe’s perspective, ‘they are the casts that fit the best in terms of physique and ability’.

Beren, who had encouraged me to take the seat of honor, is probably the person within the Elder Dwarfs that I speak with the most.

In terms of weapons, he has a decent mastery in a good amount of them, but the one he is the best with is the axe. In terms of magic, he can use

self-buffs and healing, but the other magic is on the negative side.

Even so, calling him a warrior would not be accurate.

Beren's fighting style is to use a variety of equipments and tools with effects, and by taking advantage of those, he aims for a decisive strike with his axe.

My impressions when spectating him, feels like the style of magic warriors.

Hm, she is here.

"Sorry for the tardiness." (Tomoe)

While I was thinking about the people from the Kuzunoha Company that have come with us to Lorel, I felt the presence of someone at the door.

After an apologize, Tomoe entered the room.

Confirming that Mio, Iroha-chan, and I were sitting, she nods and finds her floor cushion to sit on.

"Sorry about leaving you a troublesome matter like that." (Makoto) "It's okay. Aside from the fried rice that is famous, there's also many other things that seem to be delicacies as well, so I think we will be able to enjoy the meals here for a few days." (Tomoe) "As expected of Tomoe-san. Gud jobbu-desu." (Mio)

Before I got the chance to answer, Mio makes a thumbs up satisfied.

"Leave it to me, Mio. As we journey, we will eat their specialties. That is one of the good parts about journeys-ja." (Tomoe) "Just as you say. Fried rice, I wonder just how good of a rice dish it will be." (Mio) It is rare to see Tomoe and Mio be so in sync, and they are all smiles too.

"Oh, you guys as well, good work-ja. Now then, take a seat already. Let's hear your report." (Tomoe) I can tell that the two of them are in a good mood.

After this, as long as there's no troublesome things coming out from anyone's mouth, it would be great.

The three heed the words of Tomoe and sit.

...In seiza.

N-No well, it is true that that's not incorrect, but is that okay?

By the way, I am sitting cross-legged, Mio looks like she is in seiza, but she is actually more slanted to the side. Tomoe and Iroha-chan are doing seiza.

Tomoe is used to it already, and Iroha-chan did it naturally so she is most likely used to it as well, but...I haven't seen Beren and the others doing seiza at Asora...

Well, they did it themselves so let's not mind it.

"Well then, I will begin."

The three look at each other and Beren nods.

The report begins with Beren huh.

If I remember correctly, he entered the country from the north mountain ranges.

Seems like it was because the dwarfs he is familiar with are living at the north side.

"Beren huh. Fine, begin." (Tomoe)

"Yes. I received the order to act independently from Waka-sama and the others, and to enter the country from a different way to gather information. So I crossed the Tortoise Soul mountain range and passed the mountain belt to reach Kannaoui." (Beren) "The Tortoise Soul mountain range?! The one at the north national border..." (Iroha) "Ah, yeah. That's right, Ojou-san." (Beren)

"Iroha, sorry but, please stay silent for a bit. Hm, right. Beren, Hokuto, Shii, let me introduce her. This girl is Iroha. Fate brought us together, and she is a guest that will be accompanying us for a while. Then Beren, continue." (Tomoe) Now that I think about it, we didn't properly introduce her... I feel like they already knew.

“Yes... after I visited the village of my acquaintance dwarfs, I traversed to mostly settlements of demi-humans on the way, but what piqued my interest was how high the good will of demi-humans was towards hyumans, and also, the attitude of the hyumans towards the demi-humans.” (Beren) “As expected, it was a lot better compared to other countries?” (Tomoe) “Yes. But...both sides had the influence of that special existence called Wise. Accurately speaking, the good will of the demi-humans is directed towards the Wise, and this indirectly affects their view towards the hyumans in this country that treat the Wise well. The comparatively softer behaviour the hyumans have towards the demi-humans is also...because the Wise are tolerant with the demi-humans, so it indirectly affects them as well.” (Beren) ...Fumu.

If the Wise are japanese, they would definitely treat the demi-humans more equally than most of the hyumans in this world.

The Wise were loved by the demi-humans, and as a result, the hyumans in this country that were actively giving the Wise shelter were favorably seen.

Favorably huh.

It somewhat feels like a warped relationship...but delving deeper would be uncouth.

This is allowing them to have a better impression with each other compared to other countries, so if their relationship is also better, there's no need to touch the topic.

“That's why, when the absence of the Wise is long, there's the tendency that the relationship between hyumans and demi-humans deteriorates. There have been conflicts recorded in the past.” (Beren) “That's a lie-desu! It is because the demi-humans try to advocate for too much authority—” (Iroha) “Iroha, we will hear that later. Don't make me say it so many times.” (Tomoe) “Y-Yes, sorry.” (Iroha)

“The first dwarf village I questioned didn't interact much with hyumans. Of course, there weren't conflicts between them either. However, in a number of mountain villages, there was indeed that kind of reality. No

doubt about it.” (Beren) “We are not doubting you, Beren. Continue. We have already understood the relationship between demi-humans and humans, so move on.” (Tomoe) “Then, this is a report I have brought to Tomoe-sama before. Along my journey, I told the clearly skilled craftsmen and the people that were especially interested in migrating about the ‘Kuzunoha Company’, and there were several cases where the other party got pretty proactive about it. We have already made the proper arrangements.” (Beren) Ah, if I remember correctly, I heard that from Tomoe before. That there were quite a lot of people aside from the first dwarf village he went to, that want to move to Asora.

Wanting to migrate and being proactive about it doesn’t exactly mean that the settlements are fed up with humans, but I heard that more than half of them are.

I think I will be meeting the people that Beren has already spoken to in the near future.

The customary closing interview.

“This is only to confirm but, is there any race or settlement there that is deeply involved with the current Lorel?” (Makoto) “Of course, no. This is a strict order from Waka-sama, so I edged it in my heart and didn’t forget a single word of it.” (Beren) “Thanks. Then, there’s something I want to ask before you continue.” (Makoto) Regarding the mysterious sprite that Beren probably knows more of than us.

That bearded—I mean, that strong sprite that has a beard, and yet, it is cute.

Well...it is the beard.

“If it is information that I have heard along the journey, ask me as much you want!” (Beren) “Then, I will be straight, what in the world is a Marikosan?” (Makoto) “...Marikosan, huh.” (Beren)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

The tension of Beren lowers.

It feels like he felt despondent the moment he heard that name.

“The only thing I heard of it is that they are sprites that live mainly in the Yaso-Katsui dungeon. Since they are earth sprites, they probably have connections with us dwarfs, but...in terms of details...I am truly sorry!!”
(Beren) “Ah, no, there’s no need to apologize.” (Makoto)

“Things I know would be...they are around this size. They are girls with an overall cute appearance. Also, they are mainly wearing things like hard hats, hunting caps, or have beast ears. Anyways, no matter which one it is, they all like to wear a hat.” (Beren) O...oooh...

Detailed information came out!

As expected of Beren!!

But wait...something is kind of bothering me here.

What part?

Uhm...

“It seems like their physical strength is decent, but maybe they are lazy, they hate walking and are mostly floating. There was also information that they have a number of mysterious special characteristics from Spirits and other sprites.” (Beren) As I try to think about what part of Beren’s explanation was bothering me, his explanation of Marikosan continued.

Overall cute gir—Ah?!

That’s it!

“The Marikosans are only girls? Isn’t that pretty rare as a race?”
(Makoto) Well, there are races like the Gorgons, but frankly speaking, I haven’t met a race that’s only women aside from the Gorgons.

There’s no doubt they are quite the rare race.

By the way, I have not met them in person, but there are races that are the opposite of Gorgons, races that only have males. It is apparently pretty rare as well, but they do exist.

If it is only knowledge, I know of the Ogre Rex, a type of Oni race, and the Veil Gazer, a type of one-eyed demonic beast.

If the Marikosan are in that category of races, I feel like their name should be more widespread.

“I think this is something that lacks credibility, but I heard that if you have a special crystal and fulfill a number of prerequisites, races other than Marikosan can...uhm...‘increase’.” (Beren) “Increase? Ah, like in a reproductive kind of way? The propagation type?” (Makoto) “I...wonder...” (Beren)

With a troubled expression, Beren is stuck in how to respond.

Can't be helped.

After finally gathering outward features, this new information about using crystals and doing things to ‘increase’, what's with that? We learned one thing and then even more mysteries got piled up.

“...From what I heard of Beren, rather than calling it a peculiar race, aren't they just a washout version of Spirits?” (Mio) Mio voices out a deduction of hers.

It is true that he said they had similar characteristics of Spirits and other sprites.

Abilities that naturally activate strongly for Low Spirits in places where the respective element is.

In that case, they would be a race that's a lot closer to spirits?

“It is a possible hypothesis, but I wonder if a race that's closer to Spirits would be at the side of a Superior Dragon. Superior Dragons and Spirits are fundamentally in an antagonistic relationship, you know?” (Tomoe) Tomoe tilts her head at Mio's opinion.

The conditions apply, but the relationship doesn't huh.

According to Tomoe and Root, the Spirits were existences created by the Goddess.

They began by being able to govern over the four elements, and then, headed on to many other elements...as a result, the ones that were managing these elements from the ‘beginning’ and were the

personifications of them, were replaced by the Spirits.

Like for example; the Superior Dragons.

Root also wasn't content with that result, and in the long past, quite a lot of fights took place.

For some reason, there's a lot of cases where, the older the race is, the higher the hate they have towards the Spirits, with the Superior Dragons being the first ones. I heard this from a certain genius and perverted dragon who then said that these sequence of events are not written in any existing books.

It seems like the I am the only one who knows this within the currently living demi-humans and humans.

I can still remember the face of Root. He had a wide smile as he placed his index finger onto his mouth and whispered to me: 'If you imprudently speak of this, the Church will use their whole force to erase you, so Shh~, okay?'.

Yeah, even though I didn't ask of it, he still told me this on his own convenience.

Oops, gotta stop.

This is a bad habit of mine I can't seem to throw away.

Concentrate on the reports.

When I turned to look at Iroha-chan to change my mood, I could see a question mark floating on her head.

For her, Marikosan is simply Marikosan, and probably doesn't have any issues about what kind of existence they are.

It is certain that they are a mascot-like existence for Kannaoi after all.

"Pardon."

"What is it, Shii?" (Makoto)

I urge the small Forest Oni, who suddenly raised her hand, to go ahead with what she wants to say.

“Isn’t it okay to think of it in a more simple way? We also investigated a variety of things about Marikosan, but thinking about the results, I thought that maybe they are unexpectedly pretty easy to understand.”
(Shii) “Result?” (Makoto)

Is it the point that this rare and mysterious sprite is indeed existing in the dungeons?

“This labyrinth, that is the biggest within the ones that have been currently confirmed, is the dwelling of one of the Superior Dragons, Doma, and seems like there’s a sprite race that likes the place. In other words... isn’t it an incredibly simple reason like ‘their interests align, so they are coexisting’?” (Shii) “...”

Tomoe, Mio, Beren, and I, and even Hokuto who has been silent from the beginning were staring at Shii.

“Even if we say Superior Dragons, each one of them has an individual personality, and that Marikosan who I don’t know if it’s a fairy or a spirit, had a perfect affinity with each other, and they went like: ‘why don’t we coexist?’. How is that?” (Shii) That kind of attitude that is practically saying: ‘this is so troublesome’ and rounds up all documents and throws them in the trash can.

Nice.

I like that attitude.

But society normally hates that way of acting.

‘Because it would make things more complicated as a result’, or so they say.

“...Fuh...normally, I would have slapped you with the paper fan a long time ago, but...we are talking about Doma after all. The possibility is there-ja.” (Tomoe) Hah?!

The first one speaking out was Tomoe, and what came out from her mouth were words that sounded like an affirmation.

“Even a dragon like you who was sleeping till death would say that much

about this dragon? Just saying but, if that guy is worse than Root, I will stop thinking and just let my instincts move my body.” (Mio) “I won’t stop you, I promise.” (Tomoe)

With a look of being truly fed up, Tomoe sighs.

Even in the eyes of Tomoe, there’s the chance that, in terms of personality, this dragon is even more hopeless than Root.

“A dungeon Spirit huh. Well, we are going to be meeting them in person, so let’s just think of them in that way for the time being.” (Makoto) “Sorry for not being of much help, Waka-sama.” (Beren)

“No, you have been plenty helpful.” (Makoto)

With his tension still low, Beren apologizes.

I tell him that it was plenty enough. And in truth, he worked pretty hard, and looking at his luggage, I can tell that he has also checked a variety of materials.

There were so many things that you would even question just how in the world he carried them all the way here, and they were stuffed in a different room, so I can tell.

“That’s the only amount of information I could gather about Marikosan, and the demi-humans didn’t have any detailed information about the mercenary group that’s based at the labyrinths depths. That’s why, what’s left for me to say is about the products and specialties...ah.” (Beren)

“What’s wrong?” (Makoto)

“I will return soon, so please wait for a bit.” (Beren)

Regarding the products and specialties, we can move them all to Asora and have them investigated, researched or whatever they want to do.

That’s why I thought the report of Beren was over, but he seemed like he had just remembered something. He rushed out from the room, and went to the above mentioned room where the luggage is.

Sounds were heard for a few minutes, and then, Beren returned with what clearly looks like a special cloth wrapped around something.

It is pretty big.

And it looks reasonably heavy.

It is a long and thin cylindrical shape, so maybe it is a sword or a spear.

“How to say, it is interesting...or more like, ill-natured...anyways, it is that kind of weapon. The chief of the dwarf village that had it stored told me to please show it to Waka-sama. I was also told that, if pleases you, you can take it as a present from them.” (Beren) “Is it a sword...or a spear?” (Makoto)

I try to directly confirm my guess.

Whichever it is, I don't think I would be able to properly use it even if I had it –to my disappointment.

“It is a sword.” (Beren)

“Hoh?” (Tomoe)

Seems like the answer of Beren pulled the attention of Tomoe, she made a sound of being interested in what it is.

“...It is probably not something that would fit Tomoe-sama's taste, but this was most likely the favorite sword of a person called Iori. The demonic dragon slayer sword 'Einkaref'. Please take a look.” (Beren) “?!! Ior-?! A-Au...wafuuu...” (Iroha)

“Wa, Iroha-chan?!” (Makoto)

What appeared when Beren unwrapped the cloth was a very long and thin sword.

Hearing the explanation of Beren, Iroha-chan suddenly stood up and screamed unintelligible words in an upright stance, and just like that...she fell backwards.

I hurriedly catch her as she fell to the floor and breath a sigh of relief.

Iori huh.

If I remember correctly, that's the historical figure that Iroha-chan likes.

“This time she loses consciousness huh. Iroha is a troublesome girl, but

it is nice that she is quiet now. But, Dragon Slayer huh.” (Tomoe) The eyes of Tomoe narrow.

A risky atmosphere leaks out slightly, but maybe her curiosity is winning, it wasn't a dangerous atmosphere.

But probably because of how much the Forest Oni, Shii, has been wrung by Tomoe, her body springs up reflexively and trembles.

...

The sword of a Dragon Slayer huh.

The figure of Sofia appears in my mind for a second.

Her sword was a lot bigger than this.

Compared to that one, this one looks pretty delicate.

I don't know if you are supposed to smear poison at the blade of the sword, but there's some complicated patterns on it, or maybe those are seams? Anyways, I don't understand it well, but the craftsmanship looks pretty complicated.

Rather than saying it is strong enough to cut the scales of a dragon like butter, it is probably more like a special effect lets it be more advantageous against dragons.

I don't know about this ill-natured part that Beren mentioned, but...it is certainly true that I feel something different compared to the weapons I have seen before.

I wonder what.

“This demonic sword Einkaref was made by our ancestors at that time, and crafted with a certain tree as its core...” (Beren) The explanation of Beren begins.

Aside from Mio, everyone else showed some interest in it and were listening to what he was saying.

A special tree huh.

Is that the reason for this sense of discomfort that's different from other

weapons?

But I feel like it somewhat resembles my Azusa...or maybe not...

(Is that true, bro? Those are really unsure words, but do you know a companion of mine? Seriously?) ...

“Waka, is there something wrong?” (Tomoe)

“...No, it is nothing.” (Makoto)

I heard something.

I look at my surroundings.

But aside from me, there's no one that seems to have noticed it.

The most that happened was that they were worried about me looking around the room.

But this was not an auditory hallucination.

It had a clear sensation of being here and speaking.

It felt kind of light and cheap though.

(That's rude~. Even though I have finally been freed and was able to arrive at a place with an interesting bunch.) Ah.

Lately, the boundaries have been slowly disappearing and I have been able to speak with a variety of things.

I see.

I look at the sword that's on top of the Japanese style desk.

It is this thing huh.

(Jackpot, bro. You are a guy with good adaptability. I am Einkaref. The supreme Dragon Slayer that accompanied the old man Iori his whole life.) (Einkaref) So I am now able to speak with weapons.

It is true that I was able to speak with things like trees and stones, and not only people, I am able to speak with most things that can hardly be called animals.

If I am not careful, I will be treated like even more of a weirdo.

Hah...

(Don't worry, bro. The only ones that can speak with me are a handful of worthy swordsmen. It is not like you have gone crazy.) (Einkaref) I am not even a swordsman, so it is a situation I can't be relieved about.

Ah...the reason why I felt you were similar to Azusa was because the sensation was close to when my will is connected to my bow huh.

(Eh? Wait, this is strange. Looks like it is true that bro is not a swordsman. I was created so that I can only talk with masters that are 'compatible' with me though. Hm...oh well, let's not mind the small stuff. I've had a lack of people to talk to, you see. Let's begin by introducing ourselves.) (Einkaref) The explanation of Beren goes through my left ear and out to my right.

Not much of it enters in my brain.

Because this odd sword, Einkaref, that's one-sidedly talking to me, is sonorously talking about his own history and achievements without stopping.

Seeing myself slowly become less and less human, I felt a bit of self-pity.

Iroha-chan didn't show any signs of waking up, and the strange meeting (for me) continued.

Chapter 256: The Kannaoui of fire and oil

Hearing both the report of Beren and the talk of the sword, I could feel my confusion increasing steadily. But salvation descended upon me.

Pin Pon

The sound of a chime that didn't match the atmosphere of the room rang, and after that, a voice called out.

It is the waitress.

A call telling us that the meal is ready, and to contact them when we are ready to go.

Beren's report had been turning into a lecture about the history of the dwarf blacksmiths and what was popular at that time, so this was truly good timing.

This sword, that's name seems to be Einkaref, still continues sonorously speaking about his own personal history in a merry manner.

If I keep a bit calm and composed, and simply whisper inside my heart what I think, he won't hear it, but if I don't put much mind to it, and just think without caring, it will be picked up by him too.

Seems like the rules of speaking with the sword are like that.

Obviously, I have only tested it a bit and checked its reaction, so I might be mistaken.

But...because the inside of my head has already been read by third parties so many times, I am pretty loose about those kind of things. But well, since there's the part about privacy, it is a plus that I have found a safe sphere in this mental conversations.

"Then, we will continue after eating, how about it, Waka?" (Tomoe)

"Good. Let's have them bring it now then." (Makoto)

"Yes." (Tomoe)

Tomoe received my acknowledgement and rings the room's chime to

request the preparation of the meal.

A few minutes after...

A number of people I don't know where they were in standby had entered into the shed along with the scent of food.

This is the shed and the corridor is quite long, so in what kind of way did they get here so fast?

This level of speed could be considered a feat already.

The darkness of the service business is deep.

It surpasses the line of being impressive and turns into scary.

Hm?

"Beren and everyone else, where are you going?" (Makoto)

As if natural, Beren, Hokuto, and Shii stood up and were about to leave the room.

Even though we are going to eat now.

"We were thinking about eating in a separate room. Eating together with Waka-sama would be too much of an honor."

"...Hah? I don't really mind so let's eat together. The food tastes better when everyone eats together." (Makoto)

"B-But..."

"It is fine. I don't mind it, and Mio will be asking for your opinions on it later, so we can do that while eating and that will save time. Tomoe is interested in what Hokuto and Shii have to say, so we can get some light reports while eating. See? Lots of benefits." (Makoto)

...Regarding Tomoe, she probably has an evil plan like identifying what dishes she likes the most and pillaging them from the others anyways.

Leaving me aside, I pity Iroha-chan.

I want to avoid the route where Tomoe aims for the share of Mio and it turns into a monster fight.

I will have these three work as lightning rods– no, as insurance in case Tomoe isn't satisfied with only her portion. Yes, insurance.

Well, what I said a moment ago was also how I truly felt.

“I-Is it really okay to accompany you?”

“Of course.” (Makoto)

“Too long-winded. Waka said it was okay-ja. Just sit already.” (Tomoe)

“In that case, we will change our clothes immediately–!!”

“They are telling you to sit down, right? Good grief. Also, we are all family here. There's no need to mind how you are dressed-desu wa. Right, Waka-sama?” (Mio)

Mio and Tomoe joined in convincing Beren and the others who are crazy nervous.

Mio did some smooth movements with her folding fan, making them swim in midair, and had them seated by force.

W-Well, as long as the results are good...

After that, I nod at the words of Mio.

“Everyone from the company is like family, so there's no need to mind your clothes.” (Makoto)

We will be having our meal in a Japanese-style hotel, so they will probably be bringing the dishes in small trays. We will probably have respective trays for each one of us.

In that case, we can just eat without minding much.

It is exactly as Mio said, we are all family, so there's no need to mind our clothes.

“Pardon the intrusion. Is everyone going to be having their meal here?”

“Yeah, please do the preparations.”

I nod at the waitress-san that asked for confirmation.

“Understood.”

Saying this, she turns her gaze towards the corridor.

“Hoh?” (Tomoe)

Tomoe voices her interest.

The two waitresses brought some big rounded thing that seems to be made directly of wood, and places it on top of the big table.

Eh? Could this be...

“There’s a small space between the table and this. Is this a part of tonight’s plans for dinner?” (Tomoe)

“Yes. This is a device that is used around Kannaoui since a long past. Like this...”

No doubt about it.

In the middle of her explanation, the waitress-san places a hand on the round shaped ‘table’ and turns it.

Just as Tomoe said, there’s a space in between, so the round shaped table revolved.

It is not like I have seen it that many times, but...this is that. The thing you see at chinese restaurants. <Rotating trays, a.k.a Lazy Susan>

In that case, today’s dinner is not Japanese-style...but chinese?!

So it really is a chinese restaurant!

I completely thought that they would be bringing things like nabe and sashimi, and maybe sushi.

At any rate, a rotating tray, it reminds me of the Showa era <1926–1989>.

‘When talking about a feast, it has to be chinese food’, maybe a Wise from that kind of era was involved in the food here.

“It is rotating.” (Tomoe)

“Yes. The dishes are placed here and distributed in order. It serves for that function.”

An expected explanation.

And while at it, the many dishes were being lined up one after the other.

Dishes that are considered the art of fire and oil, in a sense, nostalgic dishes.

By the way, when it is called chinese food it means that it is chinese food that was changed to fit the taste of the japanese, and when it is called chinese cuisine it means that the food is made exactly as its roots.

There was one guy in my archery club that was specially fussy about this.

He was saying things like: ‘don’t nonchalantly go to stores that make sichuan cuisine, it can kill your tongue’, or something like that.

I didn’t understand what he meant.

In the first place, is sichuan cuisine and chinese cuisine any different?

Chinese food will obviously be different though.

Mapo tofu tastes good though, is that so bad?

For some reason, I ended up worrying about a pointless mystery.

“Sauteed octopus, deep fried chicken, and that’s...sweet-and-sour pork? Ah, ebi chili! I see, so that was chinese too. Also...mayonnaise shrimp? Isn’t that from the Heisei era? I hope it doesn’t simply look like mayonnaise shrimp but is actually a weird syrup that tastes sugary. I will get angry with you if that’s true, okay “mayonnaise shrimp”?” (Makoto)

“There’s dishes here that you can easily find in other restaurants around the city, but all the ones here are made with the best ingredients and by the number one chef in the present age. I can vouch that this will definitely become a good memory for your journey, so please take your time enjoying it.”

The waitress-san turned her gaze and made a gently smile at me when she heard about how I knew a number of the dishes here, and simply gave supplementary information.

In other words, she is saying: ‘our food is different from other places, you know. Hehe’.

Ah, the fried rice arrives.

A fragrant scent... This...it smells a bit like they singed the soy sauce.

That means they have decent amount of knowledge in the flavoring.

Nice nice.

Might be a particular style of this world though.

And there's also...is that the dessert?

Annin tofu and Agar are cut in cubes and floating in some sort of transparent syrup along with some fruits, like a chinese-style fruit punch.

This is a guess that relies on a past that already feels pretty far, but it is probably not so off.

Next is...the black and big iron pot that has some sort of red food making gentle boiling sounds. The looks are similar to mapo tofu.

But a part of it is different from the one in my memories.

A darkish powder has been sprinkled all over it, and maybe it was cooked beforehand, there's clear vivid red chili pepper placed on the sides.

Well, that's probably decoration.

It seems like there's minced meat in the tofu, so maybe it is the regretful-type of mapo tofu?

In the end, the round table that was pretty big was lined up with dishes one after the other, and after preparing a massive amount of plates, the waitresses left.

I woke up Iroha-chan, and after the customary: 'Itadakimasu', we began dinner in our first day at Kannaoui, at this room that's completely filled with the scent of chinese food.



When there's a rotating tray, the revolving will create fights.

The moment Tomoe and Mio were at my side, I could tell this future.

With something as simple as what direction I turn it to, sparks would fly.

I moved away as soon as possible, so it ended only as sparks though.

It is true that going around and around is a pretty interesting gimmick, and as a result, everyone had fun with it.

The food was mostly good as well.

It was truly chinese food.

The bon bon chicken was good, the sweet-and-sour pork was on the sour-side which is to my liking, and the deep-fried chicken-looking one was carefully made and the skin was crispy. No complains.

It must be made differently compared to the deep-fried chicken until now. It was cut in chunks after all.

Ah right, the ebi chili was good too. The thickness of the sauce was not much, and the shrimps used were pretty big. Yeah, that one was nice.

But...the mayonnaise shrimp and the mapo tofu...you guys were no good.

You damn sweet cream in the guise of mayonnaise shrimp, perish.

I felt as if this was the grudge of Shiki who was left behind.

Also, the mapo tofu that I felt as if each spoon I brought to my mouth hurt and numbed me, this was the first time in this world that I felt I was fed poison.

This is the worst.

The waitress explained that 'there's a lot of people that get addicted to this dish', those guys must have something wrong with their tongues.

Must be that black pepper-like thing, yeah. Moreover, it was hard to get used to it.

The hot taste of the chili pepper was plenty enough already. Just what in the world were they thinking when they made this monstrosity?

Tomoe, Beren, and Hokuto said something weird like: 'I can understand how someone could get addicted to this'.

That mapo tofu poison must have taken out their tongues, definitely.

(And you see, the things I like to eat the most are famous swords. At present, I can eat almost all weapons. But it is not like you can always find those, you know. That's why I normally eat materials in order to distract myself from hunger. If I had to choose from those, it would definitely be the scales of dragons. If you try putting me inside a warehouse full of dragon scales, I am confident I can empty it all in one night. Seriously.)

Probably because he was provoked by our happy dinner, the self-proclaimed Incredible Dragon Slayer Sword speaks about his own likes in food.

A sword is talking about eating...

That feels kind of bizarre already.

This sword, Einkaref, can eat.

This sword is a weapon that was made with a special tree as its core.

The name of that core was Parasite Tree.

This tree parasitizes on demonic beasts, takes over its body, and changes it into nutrients for its own body. Attacks other organisms, devours them, and increases its own power; a strange tree.

One time, there was a dwarf who learned that a magic clad crystal was considered as a parasitic target as well, and was utilized as an ingredient for crafting which attracted the attention of everyone.

And so, the equipment that was born from this were quite powerful, but at the same time, in order to continue showing their capabilities, they had to continue feeding them.

What a pain.

According to Einkaref, the equipments that are masterpieces in that category can predate on strong weapons and outstanding materials in order to increase their power even more, though the increase variates between each one.

Einkaref said that, in his case, his affinity with dragons is high.

Eating plenty of the dragon scales that are his favorite, and also nails,

fangs, and horns, he increased his Dragon Slaying power...but after the death of Iori, there were no masters and he was forced into a long sleep at the dwarf village.

Being unable to continue eating, falling into a dormant state was unavoidable, and in that time, his ability as a weapon had plummeted.

Moreover, the equipments that were made from the parasitic tree all had some will of sorts, and only people that are able to communicate with them can properly utilize them.

In other words, their masters are incredibly limited, and maintaining their performance capabilities is difficult.

Hence, this trend didn't continue for long and the use of parasitic trees for weapons was discarded.

It is truly an understandable and obvious end.

But in the knowledge that Beren has, the weapons made from the parasitic trees suddenly faced an abnormal decline in their power, and the reason of it was not understood, so they were steadily thrown away.

The reason was most likely because they were not used for battle in a good while and because they hadn't found an owner for a while so they entered a dormant state.

From the dwarfs' perspective, they had done the proper maintenance, so they couldn't understand the reason why their performance decreased.

Right now, at this very moment, Einkaref was telling me the reason why this happened to him and the other weapons.

I don't know if it's because of him being a sword or because of the parasitic tree part of him, but thanks to my ability to speak with a variety of things, I can communicate with him.

It seems like it is easier to speak with me compared to his time with Iori, so the sword has been talking a storm.

At the time when Beren was wrapping up the matter of Einkaref so Hokuto and Shii could begin their report, I spoke about a variety of things

with the intention of giving out supplementary information, but Beren's eyes flew wide open. His mouth was also wide open.

It is unusual of Beren to make faces like that.

And then, Tomoe asked me to reveal how I knew that information, so I told them that I spoke to the sword. At that moment, a hard to describe atmosphere covered the room.

No well, isn't this the usual?

It would be one thing if something big happened, but...it is about me, so I would like it if you were able to cope with about anything. Just kidding.

...Hah...

Ah, the fried rice was normal.

Everyone had praises for it, but for me, it had a taste that I seriously could only describe as normal.

It is a bit of a pity.

"I now understand the reason for the performance decrease. But as a blacksmith, hearing about a weapon that eats materials and cannibalizes on other weapons just...sends shivers down my spine. Seriously." (Beren)

Right?

I heartfully agree with Beren's words.

"And so, Hokuto and Shii, you said that you encountered strange mercenaries. The first one sounds like the ones we came here for, but the other ones, I have no idea. What are the 'people of Apple'?" (Makoto)

When Hokuto and Shii did some consequential sweeping of the mamonos that were coming out from the grand labyrinth in Kannaoui, while walking to the settlements of humans until they reached here.

Regarding the state of the humans they saw on the way, well, there wasn't anything special to mention.

We kept Iroha-chan company, so we have gone around a good amount of places. What they said was within what we already know.

What piqued my interest were the two parties they encountered and fought together with, the mercenaries.

One of the parties called themselves Picnic Rosegarden. They had quite the ability, and were going around defeating the mamonos that came out from the grand labyrinth.

And the other one was...a group of two that called themselves people of Apple.

Hokuto and Shii both said that they have 'outrageous' ability, and one has the looks of a dancer and the other a sister.

Both were women.

Tomoe muttered: 'it is them huh'.

Maybe she has met them before, or she saw them in a memory of someone; whichever it is, it seems like she has an idea of who they are.

"Waka, about that Apple—" (Tomoe)

"E-Excuse me..."

The moment when Tomoe was probably going to speak about those people, Iroha-chan lifts her hand nervously -along with a frail voice.

"What is it?" (Makoto)

Iroha-chan and Tomoe always have bad timing and interrupt each other.

It seems like she has something to say, so this time, instead of Tomoe, I urge her to continue speaking.

"About those Apple people, I probably have met them-desu. Uhm...they saved my life once. A silver haired person that, even though she is dressed as a dancer, is an expert at sniping, name's Haku-san; a person that has the same silver hair, is dressed in a priest outfit, and provides incredibly precise healing, name's Ginebia-san." (Chiya)

Tomoe nods lightly.

I see. She learned of them when she read Iroha-chan's memories huh.

"Meeting those two, I..." (Iroha)

It seems like Iroha-chan had been betrayed by the adventurers she hired at the outskirts of Kannaoi, and at that time, she was saved by the Apple people.

Hmmm...

That's why she was able to come all the way to Mizuha huh.

Even so, I feel like the speed they moved at was way too fast.

Those two probably have some sort of...teleportation-like technique to mobilize.

Iroha-chan obviously knows this, but it doesn't come out in her story. In exchange, she told us that those two are no longer in Lorel.

She said they headed to the north.

If they are mercenaries, it is a valid possibility that they went to the war's front line.

But for some reason, my intuition is telling me that's not the case.

Whichever it is, there's no point in minding people that are not even here right now.

The most I would do would be to have someone investigate about the Apple people or the keyword 'Apple' from tomorrow on.

Now then...it is already reaching the time where we can't avert our eyes from the cave, dungeon, grand labyrinth.

Also...

“ ... ”

Staring at Iroha-chan, she looks back at me with wonder.

I have already contacted Shougetsu-san and the others about Iroha-chan, at worst, we won't be able to journey together anymore.

Thinking about it rationally, there's no way we could bring her with us to the labyrinth.

It seems like the city of Kannaoi is also having a number of issues, and

there's signs of Tomoki scheming something.

It is probably better to deal with this in a Koumon-sama way, divide the duties in: Beren's group at the city, and us for the labyrinth.

What is the correct answer?

In this kind of moments, it really helps out that Tsige is currently in a lull state.

The latest report of the situation I received was that there's no real need to enter the defensive, and they are currently using the negotiations and raids cleverly to produce an advantageous stalemate.

It is the situation that Rembrandt-san wished for. That's ideal.

...Right, the matter of Tomoki and Iroha-chan occurred after we arrived here.

In other words, irregular events.

In the first place, the Kusunoha Company and I have come here in order to gather the cards that Tsige currently needs. Can't go changing that.

Just like Mio who suddenly said she wanted to go to the kitchen while the meeting was about to enter its second half. Yes, just like Mio who turned around on her way just to say that she will be back by bath time. Truly a person that doesn't change.

Since she was looking at my reactions, there's no way she will be going to the kitchen to learn how to make the mapo tofu.

If I teach her the normal recipe later, I will be able to rest at ease... probably.

"First, the grand labyrinth. If it seems like there's enough spare strength, we can investigate the city at the same time. Only if we have the spare strength, that is." (Makoto)

"As you will. I think that's a good plan. Even if there's the need of everyone here to beat the labyrinth, we still have more personnel. Let's leave the people I chose as spares just in case to these guys here. You can do it, right?" (Tomoe)

“Yes!”

Beren and the others return an affirmative answer at the confirmation of Tomoe that felt as if she was putting pressure on them.

It is true that if there's the need to, we can increase the amount of people.

I unconsciously tried to divide the work with only the people that are here.

The amount of times Tsige can step in strong has increased and the independence is growing closer. That's why, first, we have to secure the cooperation of the mercenary group.

After that, let's do all the miscellaneous business we have here. In my opinion, it feels like it will mostly be about Tomoki, and that depresses me.

We have decided on our plan.

Chapter 257: Entrance, like an underground discharge channel

“What is this...?”

Grand labyrinth of Yaso-Katsui, that’s the largest labyrinth in the world.

The word ‘grand’ just naturally describes it.

A dark, confined and humid underground dungeon that brings chills in my spine, the big boss of the caves.

In the first place, I thoroughly hate labyrinths, and on top of that, it is dark and humid...oops, let’s stop repeating that. Anyways, it is true that I came here with quite the resolve.

...And yet, right now, I had my mouth wide open and was looking at this place.

It is bright like broad daylight, is unbelievably vast, and has an abnormally wide and tall ceiling.

I remember having this feeling before.

Right, that was when I was watching a TV program about the underground discharge channel.

It was the same feeling as when the excessively spacious space was projected like some ancient historic ruins.

It is a space that reminds me of how incredibly small people are.

This place is similar.

Grand Labyrinth of Yaso-Katsui, wide first floor underground.

That’s the name of this place.

“The entrance gate was gigantic as well after all. It looks like they give it quite a lot of maintenance.” (Tomoe) “Right-desu wa. Leaving aside how far of this dungeon looks like this, the power of the people is pretty impressive. About 1–2 kilometers of the World’s Borders has begun to have the handiwork of people involved, so once the conflicts are resolved,

it might become a situation like this.” (Mio) What Mio said about: ‘how far of this dungeon looks like this’ referred to the situation in our surroundings. It is like a famous touristic spot.

People, people, people; unbelievable liveliness.

...Well, the World’s Border might become like this around the entrance.

Leaving aside if the World’s Border can actually be considered a good tourist spot, the current vitality of Tsige is certainly unmeasurable.

Looks like Tomoe and Mio didn’t know that the labyrinth was in this situation either, they are looking around with interest.

They aren’t showing an unsightly behavior like opening their mouths wide though.

After advancing for a while, the density of people steadily decreased and it finally entered a state where we can look at our surroundings.

Even though it is a labyrinth, the groups of people stand out more than the mamonos.

The field of vision is also satisfactory. There’s simply a lot of people, there’s no darkness.

There’s a lot of people that seem to be customers and also gatherings of beginner-looking adventurers.

Since it is a labyrinth, it will obviously have mamonos appearing here and there.

I can see a number of people fighting.

The moment a mamono is spotted, the cases when they gang up on it are many.

How to say it...how peaceful.

For a moment, I felt like I came to a beginner field in an MMO game.

It feels exactly like a famous hunting spot that’s a few maps away from the city.

“Hokuto, how’s the accuracy of the map you bought at the guild?” (Shii)

“...There’s parts where the scaling is not measured well, but it is mostly accurate, Waka-sama.” (Hokuto) “Hello~? The one who asked just now was the companion that has been with you for several days now, Shii-chan.” (Shii) “You coincidentally asked something that I was about to tell Waka-sama, that’s all, Shii.” (Hokuto) For some reason, Hokuto directed the answer of Shii’s question to me.

Hokuto and Shii, it looks like they are doing well.

They are both from different races, so I was wondering how it was going, but I don’t see any such friction between them.

Even if their time together has been short, it would be nice if this serves as a test case for future chances.

The Arke, Hokuto, has in his hands the map of the grand labyrinth that we bought at the Adventurer Guild before coming here.

In a lot of meanings, he is the best choice to hold the map.

It is a super high-class article that shows the layout until the 10th floor, and it is thick. The price was also brutal, but well, it is crazy thick.

For some strange reason, just because of this one point, I was able to somewhat accept its price. Must be the magic of thickness.

Of course, it is not like we are walking around with the closed map.

We had unfastened the superficial map first.

“Please leave the mapping to me.” (Hokuto)

His other specialty aside from fighting is mapping.

Maybe because there were many occasions Hokuto has been asked to do things like surveying, at some point in time, he had obtained enough ability to call it his specialty.

He said that by activating the surveying skill, he is able to grasp the surrounding topography in a distance of around 100 hectares.

The first time I was explained this, I remember that I was flustered when I suddenly heard the word hectares. When he added by saying: ‘Maybe it

would have been easier to understand if I had put it in ares?' it made me even more flustered.

Neither of them click in my head, geez.

For a normal person, measurements like ares, hectares, and hectopascals are already puzzling enough, and yet, for some reason, everyone in Asora is able to adopt such a variety of my memories.

Hectares is supposed to be a measurement used in agricultural lands, so I think he is able to survey quite a large distance. Thanks to the special mapping skill of Hokuto, I am able to use [Sakai] for the usual self-defense and power concealment.

I am grateful for that.

"I am counting on you, Hokuto. Beren, is that matter with the sword okay?" (Makoto) "I have tightly shut him up, so please don't worry. Even if by some chance a person that can hear its voice appears, releasing the seal will take several days. Wouldn't even be possible to move it." (Beren) "Nice. Hah, it was so noisy I couldn't take it. That guy spoke nonstop for all night." (Makoto) "In the end, no one else aside from Waka-sama was able to hear its voice, so in my personal opinion, it actually feels pretty vexing." (Beren) "I think not being able to hear it is for the best. That thing is seriously..." (Makoto) "A weapon that has a will, and yet, no blacksmith was able to hear its voice, but Waka-sama is able to. Why? Hmmm..." (Beren) "Lately, I have been able to speak with a variety of things, so I am the strange one here. At any rate, I am not even a swordsman to begin with." (Makoto) Right now, the people here are me, Tomoe, Mio, Beren, Hokuto, and Shii.

Einkaref is currently...at the hotel's room.

...We left it there together with Iroha-chan.

While at it, we also left Shougetsu-san and his companions there too.

We told them that we will be returning every night there, and then, Akashi-san shouted: 'Safety secuured!' and made a victory pose. That image is burned in my mind.

‘Being able to receive safety, that surpasses what someone can buy with money, is fantastic’, is what Yudoku-san said.

The security in the Chihiro Man Rai restaurant is, to be expected of a high-class hotel, in quite the level to begin with, so we simply placed a bit more defense on the shed.

In the end, even if they return home, the ‘prince and princess battle royale: assassination race’ is still continuing, and if Iroha-chan returns there, she will be in a situation that invites danger.

I thought about escorting them there this morning, but Shougetsu-san’s group was at the reception in good timing, and we agreed to them using the room.

Accurately speaking...it was Shougetsu-san with bloodshot eyes pleading at me though.

The charming information gathering and land survey Iroha-chan did in the many villages we visited on our way to Kannaoui, and the investigation results we gathered; we gave that information to them, and told Shougetsu-san and the others to hear about it and try comparing.

...That girl is...kind.

The current me can understand her a bit.

The numbers and the present state that the people in the villages answered Iroha-chan with, its meaning...those numbers were quite different from the actual numbers.

Even so, it is not like it was a mistake.

The tax of this world is absurdly high after all.

From country to feudal lord, from feudal lord to government officials, from government officials to the village chiefs; as this information gets passed around in this fashion, there’s bribery that’s really usual.

Even in the Edo period, there was a ratio of 4 to government and 6 to people and they were still saying things like: ‘it is practically tax-free’, as they opened their arms wide and collected heavy amounts of tax.

That's why villages will protect themselves as well.

They are thinking of a lot of ways to live by even if taxes are taken.

And in truth, in Kannaoui, the normal ratio is 8-government 2-people, and 9-government 1-people.

Even in the villages that we had gone to, their report compared to the real amount harvested is incredibly low, and by doing this, they managed to reduce the tax for a long time, and they also secretly cultivate crops with high potential to turn into money and do side jobs.

With Tomoe and Mio, most situations can't be hidden, so the real situation in those kind of parts was completely laid bare to me.

That information...I don't know how it will roll, but I have left it in Iroha-chan's hands.

I didn't have any intentions of receiving any money or rewards, but hearing the words she declared as she turned around when we arrived at Kannaoui, I decided to give this to her in order to have her stop.

This is just too much after all.

"The new route that will connect Mizuha and Kannaoui, I will negotiate with the country and make sure to have it named Raidou route! With a grand public work project, we will place all our gratitude and respect! Definitely-na no desu!"

That's no joke, geez.

Just remembering it is making my head hurt.

"Now then, let's begin the labyrinth exploration. Anyways, the priority is to find the stairs going down." (Makoto) If we simply stand around the vicinity of the entrance, we might become the preys of ardent salesmen trying to push us tour guides or souvenirs.

And in reality, the presence of business is stuffy here.

Around here, the people that are holding a flag are selling tour guides, and there's also salesgirls from companies that have temporary stores inside the dungeon.

Their commercial spirit is tough.

Of course, they are selling on site, so it is a lot pricier than buying it in the city. Must be because the location price is also included.

It is a mystery whether a place as close as this can become good business though.

“Hokuto, where’s the stairs that head down-desu no?” (Mio)

Mio asks Hokuto the location of the stairs.

Receiving a question from a direct superior, Hokuto was slightly flustered, but after a bit, he said that it wasn’t that far from here and points at the crowd.

...It is unexpectedly close.

“It seems like there’s people heading down from there.” (Hokuto) “For a spacious place, it is pretty close.” (Makoto)

Is the objective of these people to sell things to the ones that are soon going to the second floor?

Whatever it is, it can still be bought in the city though.

Everyone should have at least that amount of intelligence.

“But...uhm...” (Hokuto)

“Yeah?” (Makoto)

“That place and over there as well. And there’s also one there too.” (Hokuto) “Eh? Eh?” (Makoto)

Hokuto was pointing different places one after the other.

In almost all the places he pointed, there were people gathered.

Why are there so many places where you can go down?

...Is it because it is big?

Is it because it is nothing but big?!

I was beginning to get dejected in a different meaning.

When I look carefully, there are stores in each of those places, and it seems like they are selling what seems to be tools.

“...Well, that’s fine. For now, let’s go down from there.” (Makoto) I don’t have a hobby of completing maps anyways.

Just quickly advance.

“Oho, wait there! That’s a bad move!! You guys, this is your first time in here, right? Beginners, right?”

Oh crap.

In the time I was amazed and overwhelmed, we were caught.

Even though we have already cleared the place that was the most crowded.

“I have been picking a biiit of your conversation for a while now, you see. Yeah, I have deduced that you need my help here!”

“No, we are fine here. Thanks.” (Makoto)

I throw him some small change and gesture him to disappear.

So small. He is probably a demi-human, the child-looking type.

His height doesn’t even reach my chest, so in the standards of the people in this world, he is pretty short.

Well it must be like those shota and loli.

He is probably not the age his appearance shows.

“Don’t give me that please, man. I know something that will be of use to you, you know? I can be useful.”

Looks like he is not backing off.

...Was the money to shoo him away not enough?

It may be normal for a tourist spot to have rip-offs, but maybe it is also because this is a dungeon that takes entrance fees.

It might be that.

There’s an entrance fee every time, so in order to stay long in this

dungeon without leaving, there's stores inside the dungeon, probably?

It is true that the entrance fee was strange.

There's the 1 time, a pass for 1 week, a pass for 1 month, and there's also a 1 year pass; with a value set for all of them, you would get benefits from it.

Of course, paying each time will obviously be costly. But...this place was the contrary, it steadily increases. You can tell at a glance that paying the entrance fee each time is the best choice.

I was wondering what in the world they wanted to achieve with that.

Obviously, we paid the one-entrance fee.

As long as we don't know who we will meet and what kind of relationship it will turn out in, I have the intentions of paying for the fee tomorrow and the day after too.

"The tour guides and information stores around here are all useless after all!!"

"..."

If that's the case, you should be useless too.

Why should we believe that this one in front of us is the only proper one around here?

"...Understood, I get it! Then, I will provide you some special service!"

Oh, it came. The 'special service'.

I feel like he will be saying things like: 'I will half the price', when we haven't even heard the price yet.

"The money you gave me just now, I will pay it with a bit of information."

"..."

Oh, he is surprisingly saying something decent.

For a rip-off, that is.

“Sensei, you said just now that you will be going down from here, right?”

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

I certainly did say that.

I’m not a ‘sensei’ though.

“Do you know what’s below that?”

“The second floor underground?” (Makoto)

“See?!”

“Hm?” (Makoto)

“That’s an answer that tells me you don’t understand this place at all!”

You are too close.

It should be the second floor down there.

If it’s actually the third floor or something like that, it would make me happy though.

The child demi-human is looking at me smiling.

Well, his face is saying: ‘Do you want to hear more? Is it bothering you?’

He is probably asking for more payment, so I give him a silver coin and decide to see his reaction.

“Wao! Nice. I like people that are generous!”

“And so, what’s this you were talking about ‘what’s beyond here’.”
(Makoto) “The Trap Floor.”

“Are you saying the second floor is filled with traps?” (Makoto) “Nope, the 2th floor that these stairs lead you to is filled with traps, the strength of the mamonos is low, and their element is mostly fire.”

...

The 2th floor that these stairs ‘lead’ to?

Ah, I have an incredibly bad feeling about this.

“I have been given this much, so...the one you see at your right is the Rock Wind Floor. Sturdy rocks create a labyrinth and from here and there you will encounter squalls, there's practically no traps, and in terms of mamonos, there's mostly Golems, and...”

“And...?” (Makoto)

“It is a dead end.”

Uwaaa.

In other words, it is that? There's so many stairs here that I don't even know how many there are by looking from here, and all of them are connected to the second floor, moreover, there's no assurance that it will be connected to the third floor?

It will probably continue being like that from the third floor on...

So that's the reason why that map was so thick.

This is the worst.

“I see. So that's how this labyrinth works.” (Makoto)

Floor 20.

Hahaha.

“Now that you understand...it looks like you guys don't have any intentions of having someone accompany you. Must be because you already have a consolidated party.”

“Well, yeah.” (Makoto)

“Then, how about this. The information I know, and the information you want to know; how about buying all of that at once?”

Fumu.

“Hokuto, seems like it is this kind of dungeon. How long would it take to make a route? Do you think we have the time to hear what this information broker has to say?” (Makoto) “I have finished surveying several floors already, but it seems like I will need a bit more time. There's still some parts down that I...” (Hokuto) “Understood. No need to hurry.”

(Makoto)

“This is surprising. Is the big one there the one in charge of mapping?”

“How much for all?” (Makoto)

I am not obliged to answer his question.

“Heee, it would be about this much of the big ones.”

The information broker opens up his palm.

Big ones...he is talking about gold huh.

5 of those.

If it's useful information, I don't mind paying that amount, and it wouldn't be a bad idea to 'feed' a number of useful people here.

Can't say for sure that we will be able to move all the people of the company that are currently here, and it wouldn't be bad to show that I am a good pay.

Let's just try to bargain for the looks, and give him the gold later.

Like the time when I was buying bamboo rakes from the store owner.

“5 gold coins huh. Isn't that...quite the price?” (Makoto)

“G-Gold?! No no no! It is silver. Please don't joke. 5 gold, you say. That would be surpassing the boundaries of a rip-off and entering the realms of robbery. I am a proper information broker!”

Oops.

I wasn't intending to actually haggle though.

It instantly turned cheap.

In the first place, it was my own misunderstanding huh.

The entrance fee here is 2 silvers for each person.

Even if we are his first customers today, is it really okay to spill out all your information for only 5 silvers?

“Isn't that quite cheap?” (Makoto)

“The information I have, or more like, it is the information that the people in the first floor sell, so yeah.”

“Are you telling me there are specific information brokers for the deeper floors too?” (Makoto) “Of course. At the respective floor’s portal, there will be information brokers. But well, in the floors that safety hasn’t been secured, the information of that area will be less though.”

“More specifically?” (Makoto)

I pay him 5 silver coins and urge him to continue.

“I’ve heard that till the 13th floor, there will be information brokers on every floor. There, it seems you will get information until the 15th floor.”

“‘You have heard’? ‘It seems’? Could it be that you have never been there?” (Makoto) “Please spare me. In my times when I was active, the lowest I could reach was the 6th floor and that was by chance. I am a guy that was always just going around the 5th floor. Yeah, it truly was only by chance that I was able to reach the 6th floor and I only took a peek of it. At that moment, I learned of my own limitations.”

In that case, maybe the 5th floor is the first place where you will hit a wall?

And the simple fact that he has experience in reaching the 6th floor is something to boast about?

I don’t really understand what’s the connection between his active days and his change in job to an information broker though.

“I see..” (Makoto)

“Ah, see there? There’s a guy there that’s guiding the labyrinth beginners, right? He is a guy that was in the same party as mine, we have known each other for long. Well, I have experience in parties as well. There’s a lot of things, you know. Separate ways, deaths, break ups; in the past, we did a lot of reckless things at the 5th floor.”

“ ... ”

I got no use for your reminiscing though.

I want my 5 silver worth of information.

“Sorry for interrupting your reminiscing, but what are those ‘portals’ that you mentioned in your talk with Waka? It is a name I am not familiar with-ja.” (Tomoe) “Oops, this wasn’t the time to be talking about me. Sorry about that. Portals are, putting it simply, teleport devices located in each floor.”

Teleport...devices?

What’s with that pleasant gimmick?

“Teleportation huh. In other words, you can use that to instantly go to the deepest parts?” (Tomoe) She said exactly what I was thinking.

“Yeah, in outline.”

“In outline huh.” (Tomoe)

“Right after passing the entrance gate, you saw a path that goes another way, right?”

“Umu, there certainly was.” (Tomoe)

“There’s a portal there that connects the entrance with the first floor. You can use the teleport device free of charge, but...there’s a condition.”

The information broker points his right hand’s index finger at us.

“That you have already reached the portal of that floor. That’s the condition for its use. Arrive there once, and by registering your adventurer guild’s card, the teleportation device will be available for use.”

So it is not that simple huh.

But with this, we can go in and out of the deep floors without arousing much suspicions. Useful information.

Now that I think about it, the only things I found at the Adventurer Guild when I went this morning was the thick high priced map, and a thin pamphlet for a countryside town somewhere.

‘If you want more details, please go there and learn of it’, that’s seriously what I was told.

Entrance fees, stores, information brokers, guides for adventurers; everyone is going full-throttle in doing business.

“Now then, let’s get back in track. I am a former explorer of the labyrinth, name’s Lubrahon Gonzou, I will have the honor of giving you a lecture about the labyrinth’s outline. What I like is my first grandchild that was born this year, and what I hate the most are Cat Siths.” (Gonzou) Gonzou starts his talk like a desultory conversation –wait, that’s an impressive name you have there, Gonzou.

What you like is your grandchild huh, that’s cliché... wait what?! A grandchild?!

“A grandchild huh. Must be cute. Treasure them dearly, Gonzou. We are the Kuzunoha Company. The person you have been speaking so familiarly with is the representative, Raidou-sama. Our Waka-sama. I am Mio, and the one over there is Tomoe-san; we are his close-aides. There’s the employees: Beren, Hokuto, and Shii.” (Mio) “Oho, thanks for the politeness.” (Gonzou)

“You introduced yourself, so this is just formality-desu wa. We are not chatting here, so continue on.” (Mio) So Mio warned him as she did our introductions huh.

And I could see Tomoe giggling.

Beren and Hokuto are dividing the work of the map and are in the middle of confirming it, Shii is bearing the metal rod that doesn’t match her body size...as if she is playing baseball.

“The first thing I have to mention is a misunderstanding that’s normally made when coming here for the first time. This first floor, popularly named as Entrance, is vast and the people that see it for the first time get surprised by it, but...” (Gonzou) That’s true.

I unintentionally made a dumbfounded face.

The ceiling is truly tall and the wideness is crazy.

“The smallest floor in the Yaso-Katsui labyrinth...is this Entrance.”
(Gonzou) ...

Are you serious?

This is the second time today that I felt the words ‘20th floor’ as something incredibly heavy.

I could feel my stomach churning.

Chapter 258: “Pretty rare” ALT floors

Entrance, Garden, Path, Valley, Maze...

In the grand labyrinth of Yaso-Katsui, each floor has their own trait and, with that as a guideline, they have their own ‘general term’ for it.

Aside from Entrance which we are currently in, it seems like all floors are different depending on where you descent from, but the floor shares similarities to a certain extent.

And this information is thanks to the hard work of the Wise, and it is how the information brokers can live by.

“Thanks for the help, Gonzou. If there’s anything more, can I rely on you again?” (Makoto)

“Of course! You can search for me here or you can call me at the Adventurer Guild and I will be there!” (Gonzou)

Gonzou was chuckling to himself and all smiles. There’s not a single trace of him being dissatisfied as he nods at my words.

...The effectivity of silver coins is...incredible.

The information as well, it felt as if he said everything he had to say and has finished his job.

We were able to ask quite a lot of things, so we didn’t feel like it was a loss either.

“Now then, Hokuto, have you found a number of paths that can take us until the 5th floor?” (Makoto)

I try asking about the mapping progress of our teammate that has been endeavouring on it while we were hearing the information of Gonzou.

“There’s around 40 routes that can take us to the 5th floor, around 20 routes that can take us to the 10th floor; this is only a conjecture, but I have found 3 routes that can take us even further down.” (Hokuto)

“Promising routes that can take us further down after the 10th floor huh.

Nice. Let's go with those. Mio, can you choose which one of those 3 look like the best?" (Makoto)

"Understood. Hokuto, which ones?" (Mio)

"Yes, it is these 3 that I think are good..." (Hokuto)

If the stairs were physically connected to the floors, I would be able to use [Sakai] to investigate.

But with a system that makes it so you get teleported to the lower floors, even if I were able to check how much of a distance there is between floors, I won't be able to check the pathing.

If I activate it in a limited range, I would be able to investigate it in detail, but I feel like it would be the same as having Hokuto do it.

If it's the guess of Hokuto who is currently making a map as he advances, I feel like it is a good choice to abide to what he says.

If we add the instincts of Mio, it would give me even more peace of mind.

"Ah, now I think about it..."

"Hm?"

Gonzou tilts his head as if he had suddenly remembered something.

"Did you know that there's talk of the master here, Doma, being slayed and that this place has become unstable due to that?" (Gonzou)

"Yeah, we have heard about it to a certain extent. If I remember correctly, it was done by an adventurer that was called Dragon Slayer." (Makoto)

"Yeah, the blue haired one. A dangerous woman. Was her name Sofia? It seems like she was the one who slayed Doma. Since the time those rumors began, the inside of the dungeon has been filled with earthquakes and cave-ins. Also, the types of mamonos changed and a lot of things happened." (Gonzou)

"..."

Because the owner has been lost, the dungeon is unable to hold itself.

This hypothesis of mine is pretty simple.

“At times, this would stabilize completely. If I remember correctly, it was the time when the hero called Hibiki-sama was at Lorel. For us, the bad mood of the labyrinth affects the business, so what Hibiki-sama did –what the hero did was something we were grateful about.” (Gonzou)

“Heeh, the time when the hero came huh.” (Makoto)

Did Senpai do something?

Thinking about the unstable labyrinth and the busy Hibiki-senpai, I just can't picture that person coming here...

“Yeah, but since that happened, reports about things that have never happened before were beginning to arrive at the adventurer guild.” (Gonzou)

“Things that have never happened before? If it's okay, I would want to know.” (Makoto)

“This information is not certain, so listen with that in mind. The first one is that all the floors below the 10th floor have changed their structure greatly. Regarding this, the frontline for the exploration are members that were chosen by the guild, and it is a matter of absolute secrecy, so there's no certainty in that. It is simply a bit of information that entered my ears.” (Gonzou)

“The structure changed...” (Makoto)

“This is just complementary info but, in the past, the guild sold maps that reached till the 13th floor, and yet, the maps they sell now only reach the 10th floor.” (Gonzou)

“I see.” (Makoto)

Maybe it is related to the labyrinth regaining its stability, or maybe there's a completely different reason for it.

No idea.

No way to know right now.

Things like the structure changing certainly sounds more believable when we combine the talk about the maps at the adventurer guild.

It can also be seen as those conspiracy theories that are made often.

“The other thing is about talk that the guild is soon going to make a move. Seems like when they have people go to the lower parts of the labyrinth, there are pretty rare times when they reach a strange floor.”
(Gonzou)

“A strange floor?” (Makoto)

“Yes. The conditions to reach it are completely unknown, but according to the people that have gone there and returned, the strange floor exists from the 3th floor and below, moreover, when you head down, there’s times when the floor returns to normal, and there’s also times when you are thrown into another weird floor.” (Gonzou)

“It is not like the floor itself is different?” (Makoto)

Like for example, going down the 1st floor and suddenly arriving at the 5th floor.

“No, at each floor there’s a number that denotes the floor you are in, and a strange symbol carved, but the floor itself is the same.” (Gonzou)

“Fumu...do you know what symbol it is?” (Makoto)

“For now, from the four parties I have confirmed with, all of them were the same symbol so I remember it. I can’t read it, but if I remember correctly...” (Gonzou)

Gonzou writes in the notebook he had, and showed it to me.

Alt.

This is from the alphabet.

Also, this is a word I have seen before. If I remember correctly, it was at the keyboard of computers.

The Alt key.

...This is bad.

I have never used it aside from games, so I don't know the meaning of it.

If I remember correctly, it was used for displaying things and changing the skill panel...

I had a friend that was good with computers, but I don't have the knowledge.

But well, if the alphabet is appearing here, it means that the Wise are definitely involved in this.

It wouldn't be strange at all if there's a Wise that has been deeply involved in this dungeon, so I feel like he has told me something pretty important in a nonchalant manner.

That was helpful.

"I see... a mysterious symbol. In that case, if a person arrives to this strange floors, there would be a writing like '3 Alt' somewhere around that place." (Makoto)

"Seems like it is engraved right at the pillar you see when you arrive. The details of these floors are being sold at a pretty high price currently." (Gonzou)

"Then, if there's a chance where the Kuzunoha Company goes there, I will have Gonzou buy that information from me." (Makoto)

"I will be waiting expectantly for it." (Gonzou)

He smiles.

...As I thought, he doesn't look like the age to have a grandchild.

"Waka, it is about time." (Mio)

Tomoe who was looking at the state of Mio and I, whispered at me.

Seems like the first route has been decided.

"Understood. Gonzou, sorry for taking so much of your time. This is a

token of my appreciation. Also, I don't think we will be encountering those mysterious floors, but if there's a time that happens, I promise we will call you. Well then, see you later." (Makoto)

"!!! No, sensei—Raidou-sama! I can't take this—" (Gonzou)

I give him 5 more silver coins and walk towards the direction Hokuto and Mio point.

"You can use that money to treat your child and grandchild something. Now then, Gonzou, thanks for the help." (Tomoe)

Tomoe follows after my words.

As she suggests him a way to use the given money.

"The next time we meet, prepare information about things that are tasty." (Mio)

After that, Mio.

Even if he is an information broker, is that type of information also counted?

"..."

Hokuto follows us silently.

"...You will probably become an incredibly fortunate information broker." (Beren)

Beren places a hand on his shoulder deeply emotive and then chases after us.

"Well, there's nothing to worry about. In the time Waka was speaking to you, he was earning several hundred times more than that. You have told Waka the information you have without lying. Good for good. This is a reward for being able to act in the most effective manner towards our company and Waka-sama. Ah, you should save money too, old man. See ya." (Shii)

Shii probably felt a sense of camaraderie from a fellow chibi, she spoke with Gonzou in somewhat familiar terms.

And then, she waves her hand and follows after us.

But, Alt huh.

“...Let the Kuzunoha Company have the blessing of Futsu-sama.”
(Gonzou)

Futsu.

Now that he mentions it, that’s also something I still don’t know much of yet.

The words of prayer that Gonzou directed to us, reminded me of the dragon called Futsu, and then, before long, we arrived at the second floor of the labyrinth.



Evening.

Inside the dungeon, it is incredibly hard to tell the passing of time in one day, but the time is flowing as normal.

At the Adventurer Guild, they square the accounts of that day’s ventures and training, as well as the materials that were brought that day. One day there is filled with busy times.

Continuing further on inside this building, there were the big shots from Kannaoui’s adventurer guild, a number of staff members, and a number of outsiders as well.

It is rare to see people that are not personnel at the deep parts of the adventurer guild.

“And so...how’s the Kuzunoha Company that was called here by Sairitz?”

The first one to open his mouth was a person that seems to be an outsider.

A man in the prime of his life.

His personal appearance is good and the other people were obeying him.

Even if the guild staff members are not, they still seem to be showing a certain amount of respect.

“In the morning, they finished their preparations and have headed to the labyrinth. Seems like they are still inside the dungeon. Hey, what’s their progress?”

The guild leader responded and inquires the details from a subordinate.

“They are currently in the third floor, but...it seems like there’s already one that has dropped out. There’s no response.”

“They arrived at the 3rd floor in the first day. It is a pace comparable to a Dragon Slayer, but...they might have hurried too much, someone died. Kougetsu-sama.”

“For people that came here by the recommendation of Sairitz, they are not the big deal huh. But it is true that since the time they were involved with princess Iroha, no one has been able to put a hand on her. We can’t be negligent, but...” (Kougetsu)

What came out from the man’s mouth was the name of Iroha.

It can be understood that the objective of the man called Kougetsu was not directly the Kuzunoha Company but Iroha.

(Buying the most expensive map and reaching the 3rd floor on their first day, isn’t that only on the level of being a bit competent? Moreover, they have already lost one of them, probably already dead.)

(I am of the same opinion, but don’t say it. We are simply devices that answer what we are asked. Understood? I want to continue working here tomorrow, you know.)

The two staff members of the adventurer guild brought their faces near each other and exchange whispers.

They are in the same room, so there’s no way that would go unnoticed. The gaze of Kougetsu was directed in an instant to them.

However, there was no further allusion to it, and his gaze returned to the guild leader.

“If possible, I would want everyone to disappear and dress it as an accident inside the dungeon though. Can you return the people at the

foremost line?” (Kougetsu)

“Kougetsu-sama, sorry for the rudeness but, are you sane? They are the most competent team in this guild, and they are doing their best to clarify the situation of the grand labyrinth. This is a mission of the highest priority.”

“I am talking about a high priority mission that involves this city and this country though. The scales of your and my high priority missions are totally different.” (Kougetsu)

“...Please don't mistake our priorities. We are not interested in the political fight of Kannaoui and Lorel Union.”

“...Hoh.” (Kougetsu)

“Because no matter the result, our situation won't change much anyways. I wonder if a country on the scale of Lorel Union can maintain its livelihood without the adventurer guild. If it is gone, who knows how much national power decline it will invite. There's not even the need to think about it, right?”

“It is true that the adventurer guild is necessary. It is unthinkable to have it disappear. But you know, for example, if there's no need for you to be the representative, and there's no need for the staff members to be the ones there...” (Kougetsu)

“?!”

The two staff members clearly jumped at those words.

“Kougetsu-sama, leave it at that. If you say any more than that, we will have to turn into your enemies.”

“It is a situation where the result is already clear, and yet, you are siding with the princess? Are you sane?” (Kougetsu)

“I didn't say anything about taking Iroha-sama's side. The people that turn their fangs at us are deemed as enemies. As long as the Adventurer Guild is not touched, we are neutral.”

“ ... ”

“Of course, if we were to be requested cooperation by a person that possesses the same influence as Kougetsu-sama, we would have acted the same way as today. I will say this bluntly, if you want to assassinate the people that Sairitz-sama has personally told the country to make accommodations to, go ahead and do so by yourself.”

“Hmph. Neutrality.” (Kougetsu)

As if saying how worthless that is, Kougetsu raises both hands up.

There’s no reaction from the guild’s side.

“Even if they were given to us, the contact with the Shadowless has been severed. Princess Iroha not only has not returned to the castle, she is staying in a facility that has the same stance as yours, the Chihiro Man Rai restaurant. They had to reunite today of all days with Shougetsu and his group, and until the very end, they were persistently running around. Seriously, how annoying!” (Kougetsu)

“...”

“It is already a hopeless situation. This city and the Osakabe’s era. It is already settled who will be guiding in the future, and yet, no matter how many times I brush them away, those damn flies keep flying around...”
(Kougetsu)

“If they are flies...”

“What?”

“If you are unable to even brush away something like that, there’s no way you can guide the future of the old family. This is not a matter I should relate with religion, but don’t you think this is an ordeal that you have to surpass with your own strength?”

“Big words there. I wonder how Sairitz will see you guys when she knows that I had you investigate the movements of the Kuzunoha Company. Isn’t that already a betrayal?” (Kougetsu)

“Are you saying we are accomplices in crime? Are you trying to threaten us?”

“I am just speaking the truth.” (Kougetsu)

“...Truly a pity. You are obviously lower than Sairitz-sama, but it seems like you are lower than the Kuzunoha Company too. You are dancing on the palm of Sairitz-sama, and your existence has already been noticed by the Kuzunoha Company. The Kuzunoha Company already has foreknowledge of the ones that are trying to investigate their movements. Seems like they have no problems in others knowing their movements. Not only that, they were concerned for the standing of the Guild. About a lot of things, they even mentioned you by name.”

“What?” (Kougetsu)

“Now then, I wonder who’s the one that’s the most out of the loop. Looks like the problem of your household still has no settled winner. Do take care.”

“...Remember this. I will never forget today’s disgrace.” (Kougetsu)

“If by chance you win the political strife, I will remember. The door’s over there.”

Kougetsu was displaying his anger and leaves the room together with his subordinates.

“...A storm is coming.”

“Yeah.”

The representative looks at the door where Kougetsu left and mutters this.

The staff member girl reflexively answered those words.

“Kannaoi will be in a dangerous state for a while. Don’t think you are safe just because you are office personnel. With how he is, it looks like he won’t hesitate in dragging us as well.”

“If princess Iroha is able to turn around this situation, that would be pretty...no, it would be engraved in history, you know.”

“But she has the Kuzunoha Company-no, she has the Wise with her. We are witnessing the beginning of a legend. It might be the moment when

history moves.”

“A Wise-sama?! That Raidou...-sama?!”

“According to Sairitz-sama, that is. Seems like he is the second Wise-sama that exists in the current age. No, maybe he is the third one.”

“Does that mean...the Empire’s hero might be one as well?!”

The male staff member was also listening and enters the conversation.

The representative just sighs at it.

“...Yeah, so it seems.”

“But if that’s the case, that means Raidou-sama who is working at a company, is the one who is the least powerful among them. It seems like he has already lost one member after all. Both hero parties were the very definition of dazzling after all.”

“About that information...is it reliable?”

“Yes.”

“I didn’t ask before but, who’s the one that was lost? Is it known?”

“I can check right now. Let’s see...Eh?”

“You are kidding, right?”

“What’s wrong? Who’s the member that the guild card signal was lost?”

“From the members of the Kuzunoha Company that are currently in the third floor, the one that we lost the signal of was...Raidou-sama.”

“...What?”

The representative looks at the information he was presented, with eyes as if he was trying to eat into it.



3-Alt.

3-Alt.

3-Alt.

No matter how many times I read it, it is still 3-Alt.

The third floor area that's called 'Path'.

"I heard it was a strange floor. I also heard that its existence was known from the 3rd floor and below. And just as told, the symbol is engraved here." (Makoto)

My thoughts were leaking from my mouth.

To think I would draw it so suddenly.

Moreover...

"I have been separated from everyone. Even though we advanced through the same teleport formation...why did it turn out like this?" (Makoto)

I was standing at a long corridor. Ah, so 'Path' refers to a corridor huh.

When we went down to the second floor, there was a teleport formation to return to the first floor.

But there's none here.

In other words, there's no way to return.

The floor shines a dim red light, and at the ceiling, there's also a round light bulb-looking thing that's shining a red light too.

The floor is wide enough for 5-6 people to walk side by side.

The light continued forward and looked like a path.

Must be the direction I have to progress.

From the sides, there were cylindrical pillar lights lined up.

It felt like neon lights.

After that, there's pitch black darkness.

From here and there, I could feel the presence of mamonos. Quite the numbers.

Even if there's not as many as the 2nd floor Drake Garden...no, that one

was excessively spacious, so in terms of density, this one might be higher.

“How to say it...it feels cools, slippery, and made of inorganic materials. Like tiles.” (Makoto)

This is not the time to be making calm observations.

Yeah, I have ended up in that strange floor.

I didn't expect it would even separate us.

Chapter 259: That's probably the Mascot

M

What a problem.

Even the thought transmission made in Asora was not able to connect at all.

I can feel the safety of Tomoe and Mio who I have formed a pact with, so the other side probably also knows about my safety.

That's what I want to think.

In this labyrinth, the first thing we do when we arrive at a new floor is to search for the Obelisk-like device called 'Portal' and register the floor we have reached.

The Alt floor I am currently in, curves and bends loosely back and forth, but it is one road.

That point honestly makes me happy.

Probably, as long as I continue advancing in the path that I am directed to, I will arrive at some portal, or...the teleport formation for the next floor.

Now that I think about it, if there were a portal here, an adventurer that has come here once, would be able to come here as many times as they want.

...In that case, the chances that there's no portal and only a teleport formation are high.

The enemies at the second floor were, as expected, not that big of a deal, so the mamonos at this floor shouldn't cause me much trouble either.

That applies for me and for Tomoe and the others as well.

In other words, instead of stopping here trying to regain communication, it is better to move ahead and hope to regroup.

"Let's go." (Makoto)

With slightly fast-paced steps, I advance through the red lighted corridor.

There are times when mamonos are encamped normally at the corridor, and some that come out from the other pitch black side of the pillars where the light doesn't reach to make surprise attacks, and it is a pattern of being attacked every several minutes.

It is not to the point that I would have to stop my advance.

It all finishes with one magic attack, but...they are a lot stronger than the ones of Drake Garden.

At the second floor, there was a sign saying that the second floor is a fiendish area, and there were few parties fighting close to the teleport formation.

When we advanced, we saw a number of lesser dragons, that were slightly stronger than the one that defeated Jin and the others quite a long while ago, flying in the sky and walking on the ground.

Just like the name Garden denotes, it is a strange area where there's a pseudo-blue sky and verdant grass.

It was an important place that taught me that a dungeon doesn't always equal caves.

"At that place, the dragons called drakes were divided between two elements: earth and wind, but this place..." (Makoto) After already defeating around 20 of those, I could tell that the element of the enemies on this floor are all a mess. Not only that, there's also ones that cast magic from far away, some that try to cut me with their claws and fangs, undeads that are armed and come rushing at me; truly a variety that doesn't bore me.

I am using a non-elemental Brid to bulldoze through the place, so it doesn't feel problematic at all.

But compared to the second floor, I feel like the difficulty has increased quite a lot.

No, saying it bluntly, this is practically throwing someone to their death.

Alt huh.

There's no assurance that it is connected to the keyboard's Alt, but it sounds like it has connections with english.

A word that begins with those three letters...

...

Someone please bring me an english-japanese dictionary.

Well, I can try to associate words and see...

I am not using my brain for anything aside from moving forward, so thinking about this is better than moving forward brain death.

[Alto, Alter, Altar...

Alter...I think I have seen it before in a game written as alternative.

What was the meaning of it?

Like 'the other thing'? 'One other'? I feel like that was the meaning of it.

If I remember correctly, I learned at the music class that Alto is the volume of your voice.

But I wonder if that was english.

It felt kind of european.]

From within those choices, well, it's probably safe to assume that alternative is the one.

Different floor, one other floor; it feels like that's correct.

I can also understand why it is at a computer's keyboard.

...At any rate...isn't the encounter rate for mamonos increasing?

The amount of Brides I am casting has increased quite a lot since the initial stages.

From the front, from the sides, and even from the back where I have already passed through; even though I haven't found the portal or the

teleport formation, a variety of mamonos are attacking me.

Leaving aside the lights from the ceiling, the density of mamonos is enough to cover most of the red lights from the floor.

At this rate, it is a matter of time before I get completely swarmed over and can't move at all.

Let's increase the pace.

From a jogging pace, I changed into running speed and shake off the mamonos from behind while I scatter the ones from the front.

I single-mindedly run on top of the red light.

I evade the avoidable ones from the side, and blow away any that seemed like they would get in the way of my progression.

Seeing the second big curve I encounter, I somewhat understood the shape of this floor.

The first straight line was around 3km, a circular curve of around 90°, and then, it returned to a straight line and once again a curve, after that, another long straight line.

It is close to the form of a track field.

Also, there's some slight slopes, so it might have a spiral shape.

On top of not finding the portal, the frequency of enemy encounters isn't lowering at all.

I pray that there's no more curves ahead.

As I pray for this, I continue running.

Even if the situation is different at the place of Tomoe and the others, I wonder if they are facing the same unavoidable battles.

If that's the case, this place is really ill-natured.

More than scheming, more than solving puzzles, and more than mapping precision; it is simply stressing on battle prowess.

If this kind of floors appear sporadically in this place, Yaso-Katsui is

quite a bothersome dungeon.

While thinking this and running, I found something that was not a portal, but is better than another curve.

“Is that...a curtain of light?” (Makoto)

A fleeting and gentle green light was undulating like an aurora as it trails forward.

This thing that covers the floor all the way to the ceiling certainly did look like a curtain.

If this means that we are at the end, that would be the best, but at worst, I would like it to be a checkpoint of sorts.

“And goal.” (Makoto)

I pass the curtain without much resistance.

It felt like cutting through a goal tape.

Well, I wasn't the athletic type in my world, so I don't really know how it feels to cut through a goal tape though.

There's no presence of mamonos at my front.

At my back...

When I turn around, the mamonos that were approaching the curtain retreat towards the darkness at the other side of the pillars.

That's pretty sportsmanly of them.

At any rate, it seems like I have arrived at some sort of resting area.

A sigh unconsciously leaks out from my mouth.

“If possible, let there be a teleport formation for the next floor...”
(Makoto) I move to investigate the area.

“You have passed the goal curtain, so it is obvious that there will be a teleport formation. You say some interesting things.”

This is the first time I hear the voice of someone else in this floor.

What came flying gently out of the shadow of the pillar was a small

floating...

“...Could it be...you are a Marikosan?” (Makoto)

“Eh? Am I popular?!”

Incredible.

What an exaggeration.

What’s with this criter?

First of all, as expected of a fairy race, her body is small.

Just like the information.

Hm? Even so, she doesn’t look so small.

For example, if you were to place her on your shoulder, it would be pretty strainful depending on her weight.

“I feel like...I am being directed quite the rude gaze.”

Looking at her total size, she would be the size of a medium-sized owl.

If she were standing, she would be at a baby size.

Her face is cute. Rather than calling it beautiful, it is cute.

Her overall attire is not fit for the place, but it looks good on her.

She doesn’t have anything resembling a weapon, but the medal furnished hunting cap looks like a trademark of hers and fits her equally well like her clothes.

For some reason, there’s the letter M engraved on it that’s probably from the first letter of Marikosan.

...

No, let’s stop averting my eyes.

This is probably...no, this is definitely an existence that the Wise are extremely involved in.

She is the very picture of the popular brother plumbers.

Aside from her gender, everything else is a cosplay. Yes, let’s be honest,

this is a cosplay.

Are Marikosans that kind of existence?

She also has the bob cut hair that I haven't seen much in this world aside from Mio.

"Well, that's fine. You have shown me something nice after all. A good while ago, there was someone that finally managed to clear this place, but not only is that person not here anymore, they probably aren't adventurers anymore. That person's eyes were not normal, you know. A rude person that left even though I showed myself."

I am the second.

And the first person was quite exhausted.

Well, that's a matter of course. Being suddenly thrown into a floor like this, anyone would be.

I wasn't really cornered, but I can understand how that person felt.

Wait...one person?

Is there such a brave soul that would dive into the dungeon alone?

Is what I thought without really answering to the words of the Marikosan, and as I was pondering her words, she lightly flies around me as if observing me.

"The one at that time was used to the labyrinth, and also knew the way to clear the Path floor, so I thought that person would have the chance to clear it. And in truth, it was quite the unsightly and boor way to do it, but that person was able to come all the way here. On the way, that person would abandon companions as the occasion calls and used them as bait, so only that person remained in the end. For a fiend like that, it was quite the deplorable result."

...

So that person came with a party huh.

The only survivor then.

...

If this place can be done with a party...why am I alone?

“In that point, you are incredible in a lot of ways. Path is a floor which the mamonos’ strength and numbers are directly proportionate to the time passed. That’s why, it is of highest priority to obtain a map and concentrate on arriving at the next floor as fast as possible.”

“...”

I did hear a bit about the floor, but I only saw Path as a battle centered floor.

But did they also mention something like that?

I feel like they did a different explanation though.

“And yet, you began to leisurely investigate at the entrance, and after taking your time loitering around, you made a ‘walking’ start. I thought you were a funny challenger. On top of that, you were alone.”

That was a bad move huh.

Yeah, if it’s a floor where time is of essence, I can understand that making a running start is the correct choice.

But leaving aside the strength, the encounter rate was at quite the nasty level.

Calling that directly proportionate is a bit hard to swallow.

I was only standing around for 20 minutes.

“Moreover, this is the Alt floor, you know? All the mamonos are enraged and their strength...well, even if there’s a lock in their strength so they don’t surpass the 10th floor power... The increase was even changed into being inversely proportional. Ah of course, the numbers as well.”

...

Not only were they throwing people to their death, they were totally intending to kill everyone.

Even I can clearly understand the difference between directly proportionate and inversely proportionate.

It is clear that inversely proportionate is no good.

Taking 20 minutes, I did something crazy.

And it really was Alternative huh. An alternate floor.

Understood.

“Wouldn’t that normally kill the person?” (Makoto)

If you are thrown here by yourself, it wouldn’t simply end with death.

So as usual, this time my luck was the worst as well huh... Ah.

Party.

It is that huh.

I am not in a party with anyone.

About Tomoe and Mio, I didn’t enquire about where Tomoe trained, but it seems like she was able to increase her level and is now close enough to Mio’s level, so they are able to form a party.

Beren and Shii as well.

But in that case, Hokuto would be a hanging element in our group as well.

It is true that I wasn’t in a party, but I feel like there’s no reason for me to be experiencing something like this.

“...Of course. It was made with a relatively high difficulty after all.”

The Marikosan was showing a wide smile.

It is a pure smile that instead of condemning herself, it felt as if she was saying: ‘go ahead and praise me’ as she puffs her chest.

“Let me tell you this since I am one of the few ones who have cleared this. Isn’t this kind of crazy difficulty a bit too much for being such an early floor?” (Makoto) “The concept is that the difficulty is similar to that of the 10th floor and below after all. In the first place, even if you tell me

this after clearing it unscathed, it doesn't sound convincing.”

10th floor and below, she says.

I was at a loss of words.

“To begin with! You can't enter the Alt floor unless you clear the previous floor with an excelling grade. In your case...at the Drake Garden... the Earth Dragons and Flying Dragons...you killed over a hundred of both? Eh? Is this number for real? Do you some special grudge towards dragons?”

...So that's the cause.

It is true that most of the second floor was handled by me.

All that came into my sight, I shot them down.

Because I hunted way too many on my own, I ended up being invited here alone huh.

Hah...

“What an outrageous person. But personally speaking, I like those kind of people. If the current master of this place were the same kind of outrageous as you, I would be able to work a bit harder though... The world doesn't always go favorably.”

The Marikosan tilts her head with a charming gesture.

Until now, I have somehow been able to ignore it but, at her face, there's a toothbrush moustache.

‘There's something on your face’, that's how out of place that moustache felt.

...It feels as if you can really take it off.

It is evident that trying to have a connection with her would be the worst.

Let's try to be careful here, yeah.

It doesn't really bother me much that she is floating even though she

doesn't have wings, but a fairy with a cute face and beard, I feel like that's an incredible trait.

The impact of having her face to face is unbelievable.

"Master. Are you referring to Doma?" (Makoto)

Master.

A word that bothers me.

And I know of an existence that this word can apply to.

I did hear that he is quite the peculiar dragon though.

"Doma...wait, isn't that the dragon that was defeated not that long ago? That was someone who poured power to this labyrinth, but he isn't the master of this labyrinth. You are an interesting adventurer, so I will tell you. Right now, he is normally together with the mercenary group that's at the deeeep parts of the labyrinth, but the one that manages this labyrinth since a long time ago has recently returned."

"Manager? Returned?" (Makoto)

"Yup, that's the master here. That's why the labyrinth has grown active again and the Alt floors have revived. We Marikosans are now pretty numerous, you know. Unless you are at an Alt floor or a pretty deep floor, you won't get much chances of meeting them though."

Why, why?

Why didn't you return AFTER we left, administrator?

Being thrown into this kind of places just because we are going fast, leaving it to brute force, and doing a bit of search and destroy; seriously, what a pain.

I was planning on just taking a peek today and return, you know!

"Uhm, if possible, can you tell me a bit more about that?" (Makoto) But since I have encountered a source of information, I have to hold it on returning and ask her a lot of things.

"Hm...next time we meet, adventurer-san. I have spoken a bit too much

after all.”

“Ah, my name is—” (Makoto)

I notice that I haven’t introduced myself.

And I don’t know her name either.

Marikosan is the name of the race and not the name of the individual.

“Let’s leave the introductions for next time too. Well, I say that, but I actually don’t have a name as an individual, and I haven’t thought about wanting one. The only ones that would want something like that would be the ‘rogue’ ones. Once we meet again, please tell me your name! See ya, mysterious adventurer-san! It was fun!”

Cutting off my words, she one-sidedly talks a storm and disappears, leaving only a faint phosphorescence behind.

I can see a teleport formation deeper inside.

Silence takes over the place.

No well, I actually think the Marikosan was several times more of a mysterious existence than me though.

She looks like a mascot, and yet, her bearing is like that of a merchant.

But it is certainly true that...she has powerful traits that can make them be considered the specialty of this labyrinth.

I stood on the teleport formation while praying that I wouldn’t be send to another Alt floor.

Fortunately, it ended in an unnecessary worry.

I was safely able to reunite with the 5 that were waiting close to the entrance of the next floor.

Chapter 260: Encounter with the unknown

“Alt floor? At the third floor, there was an Alt engraved at the entrance.....!!! Could it be the ‘Crimson Corridor’?! To think it actually existed.”

“We have confirmed the Crimson Corridor... I won’t be surprised anymore. I have grown up.”

Accomplishing the first encounter of a Marikosan, I was able to reunite with everyone at the next floor.

We decided to finish the exploration of that day and returned to the hotel.

Third floor clear.

We anticipated that we would be able to go even lower, but we had a harder time than expected.

While we were doing a reflection meeting of sorts, Iroha-chan and her group who were taking refuge here were participating at some point in time.

Shougetsu-san was surprised when he heard the name Crimson Corridor and we received words of surrender from Iroha-chan.

“According to Hokuto, the route till the 10th floor has been made, and if there’s a problem happening from tomorrow on, it would definitely be those Alt floors. A place where not even thought transmission works, just what kind of mechanism is at work there?” (Tomoe) “That’s the part. It seems like there’s some sort of requirements. You have to show excelling results at the previous floor in order to be thrown to those Alt floors, so it would be bad to hurry too much and get everyone separated.” (Makoto) I don’t think speed is the only condition.

At the Garden, the condition was the number of Drakes defeated, or it was at least one of the conditions.

Leaving me aside, in the cases where Beren, Hokuto or Shii are thrown into the Alt floor, it might become dangerous.

The lower we go, the dangers most likely increase.

“Then, how about going to the labyrinth with just Tomoe-san, Waka-sama, and I from tomorrow on? If it’s us, no matter who gets thrown into the strange floor, there won’t be much problems.” (Mio) Mio proposes what’s possibly the number one safest way.

It is true that with that there will be no dangers.

If it’s only us three, most of anything would be okay.

But...there will be no mapping from Hokuto, no judgment from Beren, and no deftness of Shii.

In a dungeon environment, their abilities might even be better adapted than us three. Especially in lower floors where we don’t have a decent amount of information. That can’t be called a good idea.

Yeah.

The words of Mio served as the trigger. A number of proposals were coming here and there.

Of course, there were the proposals saying they wanted to accompany us. Their desire to accompany us from tomorrow on was clear to see.

Even if they don’t go to the labyrinth, they can do things like gather information regarding Iroha-chan, so it is not like there’s nothing for them to do.

But that part is not the original objective, or more like, its priority is low.

The number one priority is to put all our effort in making the negotiation with the mercenary group succeed, you know...

The reflection meeting that continued till dinner had idle talk mixed in it as well, and it didn’t look like the decision could be reached.

“I have an opinion. Is it okay to say it?”

That voice came from my back.

At a place that was close to my neck, a blade was placed there, and with the other hand that wasn't holding it, that person saluted.

“?!”

Tomoe, Mio, and everyone else noticed the current situation after those words.

Well, that was the same for me.

It truly was as if he had suddenly appeared just now.

Really a surprise.

So surprised that I lost the chance to get panicked.

“Grand Master?!”

But within that surprise, one person directed the words ‘Grand Master’ at that man.

A word I am not familiar with.

It is a word that I feel was given to some sort of robot in a game.

The owner of the voice is Shougetsu-san.

“Umu, it has been a while, Shougetsu-kun. You have gotten quite the presence now.”

“Y-Yes. Rokuya-sama truly hasn't changed.” (Shougetsu)

“I am an eternal 20 years old after all.” (Rokuya)

Suddenly turning his blade at me, yet speaking nonchalantly; I don't know what kind of intentions he has, but this man that seems to be an acquaintance of Shougetsu-san even introduced himself and made a joke. He parted the blade from my neck, and, without any noise, he moves towards the wall and places his back there.

Is he an assassin?

I can instantly tell that he is incredibly skilled.

I don't know what skill it was, but not a single person in this room was able to catch his presence.

Because he moved, I was able to confirm his appearance as well.

He has a low height similar to mine which is pretty rare in this world, white hair that's neither long or short, extremities that I can feel firmness and flexibility from.

To my surprise, his appearance is a lot further than the standard of this world, even more than me.

The identity of the blade that was at my neck are a pair of katars.

He wasn't taking a stance with them, he only had them with him.

"...Shougetsu-san, who is he?" (Makoto)

"He...Rokuya-sama is my...master's master." (Shougetsu)

Master's master?

Ah, so that's why it is grand huh.

Like when you say grandparent.

Shougetsu-san who is already an old man is calling him the master of his master; just how should I read those words of being 'eternally 20 years old'?

However, the appearance of the man named Rokuya is really around 20.

Is his aging stopped with some sort of method?

"I am a passing assassin, name's Rokuya. Pleased to meet you." (Rokuya)

"I am Raidou. The representative of Kuzunoha Company. Pleasure is mine." (Makoto) "Sorry for doing something dangerous a few moments ago. Since I wanted to see the person who was able to pass the Crimson Corridor, I suddenly did something as stupid as that against my better judgment. Even though you were approached to such a proximity, you didn't seem to flinch at all. It has been a while since that happened. You are quite...splendid." (Rokuya) "Rokuya... Assassin Rokuya. Are you the real one? You are still alive? Is this a joke?"

"I thought Shougetsu-sama was able to make funny jokes, and yet... seriously, this joke's not funny at all."

The two bodyguards of Iroha-chan were dumbfounded.

By the way, Tomoe and Mio had taken their battle stances in an instant, so I command them with my hand and calm them down.

Because if he went through the trouble of speaking with us, that means he didn't come here with the intentions of killing.

He is still an unknown factor though.

"Rokuya-san, was it?" (Makoto)

"Yeah. The remaining people here are your subordinates, and...the people that serve princess Iroha, right?" (Rokuya) "That's right. And so, is it okay to assume that you are not an enemy?" (Makoto) I heard the word Assassin.

Lately, I have been attacked by those all the time.

Even I wouldn't just assume that he is not related.

"Fumu, currently, the answer to that question would be that...I am not." (Rokuya) After a short silence, Rokuya-san faces me and answers in that fashion.

"...Then, what's your business?" (Makoto)

"I was a bit interested in the objective of you guys. I heard that Raidou-kun's objective is the 20th floor, more accurately speaking, the mercenary group. Is that true?" (Rokuya) "...Yeah, that's true. But that doesn't answer my question." (Makoto) "Of course, I know. Let's answer in order. About me, well, it would help me a lot if you just ask that from Shougetsu-kun later. In that way, the information would be more definite than if I were to say it myself after all." (Rokuya) ...

It is more definite than him speaking himself?

What does that mean?

"Then, what's your answer to Waka's question-ja? Speak in the time we are being docile." (Tomoe) "That's what I shall do, dragon samurai. The reason why I visited Raidou-kun...one of them is, just as I said before, my interest for the person that was able to pass the third floor's Alt floor; the

other one was to confirm his objective; and the last one, is to leave a message to him.” (Rokuya) “Message, you say?” (Tomoe)

From the voice of Tomoe, I could tell that she was pretty angered towards Rokuya-san.

That was the same for Mio and everyone of Asora here.

Everyone from Iroha’s side seemed to feel some sort of reverence towards this person called Rokuya-san.

The reason why they haven’t participated at all in the conversation unless they are directly spoken to by Rokuya-san must be because of those emotions of theirs.

“Right now, my comrades and I are together with the mercenary group you set your objective on. By the way, the current leader of that mercenary group is my disciple you see. Name’s Vivi –not Bibi, okay? She gets pretty angry about that, so be careful. Also, she can be considered the direct mentor of Shougetsu-kun there.” (Rokuya) ?!

The leader of the mercenary group is the mentor of Shougetsu-san?!

Wouldn’t that make her quite the old woman?!

Is she still in active duty?

Well, it seems like she is mindful about being called Bibi instead of Vivi –though I feel like they are both the same-, so at that time, let’s be considerate about it.

My name is Makoto, but if we play with the words a bit, it can turn into Maggot , and I wouldn’t like that either.

“Yes, Vivi-sama is my mentor. She is probably the person that possesses the most prominent skills in stalking and surprise attacks. A pro at raids.” (Shougetsu) ...

What an unpleasant explanation.

Yeah, I don’t like it.

As a negotiation target, I don’t have a good feeling about this.

Even before I meet her, I can say that.

When I look at Shougetsu-san, I could see that he was talking about his mentor with pride. There were no signs of doubt. He didn't feel anything negative from it.

Have no choice but to say that they are in a great teacher and student relationship.

"I see. Then, that message you have for me is..." (Makoto)

Could it be from that Vivi-san?

"No, it is not from her. It is from a different person that's at the same floor. It was a favor from a comrade of mine, so I am fulfilling it since I was going outside anyways. Well, I decided to take it. As a result, I was able to meet an...outstanding talent like you." (Rokuya) "A different person..." (Makoto)

"I don't know the details of his business or his plans, but according to him: 'Going right now would be the worst timing for both sides. If you want to negotiate with Rosegarden, I want you to wait for a while'." (Rokuya) Worst timing huh.

I don't know the current situation of the 20th floor, but it doesn't sound like a message with evil-intent.

Wait, huh.

It depends how long.

If it's to a certain extent, I think I can wait.

"That 'wait', how long is it exactly?" (Makoto)

"I wasn't told the details. If it is okay with my subjective opinion, I can tell you though." (Rokuya) "I don't mind." (Makoto)

"I see. To me, it felt like he was talking about several years time." (Rokuya) Nope.

Can't wait for so long.

And those are not the words of the mercenary group's Vivi-san, but of

someone else.

In other words, it was a warning from a third party.

They don't know our circumstances either.

Then, there's plenty room to try and make a direct negotiation.

"...You have a face that's saying it is way too long." (Rokuya) "Just as you say. We want to request the strength of Picnic Rosegarden as soon as possible." (Makoto) "I don't understand. It might be rude to say this, but I don't think you guys need their strength at all. If it's a battle at the 20th floor, it is certainly true that they might be strong enough to be a match, but...everything aside from that, I don't think you guys would be falling behind them at all. You guys are stronger." (Rokuya) "The ones who need the strength of the rumored numbered one strongest at defensive battles are not us but Tsige." (Makoto) I decided to speak about our circumstances.

How to say it, it is because I felt like it was okay to speak about this to this Rokuya person in front of me.

"Tsige. The town of the people that challenge the World's Border huh. No, it might not be the case now though." (Rokuya) "No, you are correct. Currently, Tsige is aiming for an independence from Aion and is fighting against two forces. Of course, in the advocacy of war, there's negotiations and verbal disputes, but the strengthening of defenses is an urgent matter, and it is the strength that Tsige currently lacks the most." (Makoto) "...Are you saying that what you lack, Rosegarden can fill it?" (Rokuya) The attitude of Rokuya-san was still skeptical.

The Kuzunoha Company and Picnic Rosegarden.

Looking at both as fighting forces and knowing them to a certain extent, it seems like he sees us as quite the power.

"We are thinking about being only a temporary help to Tsige." (Makoto) "A mercenary group that's hired with money is the very definition of temporary, you know?" (Rokuya) "But this will definitely become the example for many of the combatants of Tsige, and I think they will

become an existence that will provide many lessons to them.” (Makoto)
“...Is that the meaning of your ‘temporary’?” (Rokuya)

“...Yes. I –the Kuzunoha Company is being called abnormal and monsters by a lot of people after all.” (Makoto) “Kuku!! Abnormal and monsters huh! That’s quite unfortunate. You guys must be relied upon by their own convenience quite a lot then.” (Rokuya) The calm face of Rokuya-san changed to a broad smile in an instant.

It was short, but it was to the point that he even laughed.

“I don’t really mind being relied on. As long as we are there, that is. Tsige has been taking care of us as well after all.” (Makoto) “...Hoh. If you don’t think of it as a pain or troublesome, then, why is it not okay for you guys to help them out?” (Rokuya) “We are being viewed as monsters by a lot of people, that’s why no one would want to learn from people like that. The word monster itself is a word that arbitrarily places the person as different kind of existences from themselves. A good habit.” (Makoto) “...”

“That wouldn’t do. That’s why I want Tsige to be able to protect itself even after the independence. For that sake, I want to obtain the seed for it. If it’s them who have survived, protected till the end, and have worked as an organization, I think they will be able to become that seed. Even if the day that we have to leave Tsige arrives, I would be able to have peace of mind.” (Makoto) “...Truly...interesting. Fumu. Now that I have heard this, the story changes. I have already mentioned this ‘worst situation’, and if Vivi and the others are handed down to Tsige, that would be great.” (Rokuya) Hearing my words, the complexion of Rokuya-san changed, and while muttering his thoughts, he moves left and right.

However, that figure of his had no openings.

He is a person that’s always ready for battle.

“If you were with the intentions of having an excursion, I would have had you leave, but it seems like it was completely different. You have obtained an official entrance permission from the Empress, and your power...your way of thinking...yeah, nice!” (Rokuya) “Eh? Nice?” (Makoto)

It is a word I wasn’t really expecting.

“Later, I want you to show me how abnormal you are, how much of a monster you guys are. If you are able to do that, I will become your intermediary. Saying it myself is questionable, but I can become a reliable ally, you know. Vivi is a wei—bothersome girl, but I –her master– will be your ally, so that single point alone would be an advantage. You can understand that, right?” (Rokuya) It is not certain that she is a person that respects her mentor though. Things like the Confucianism had their questionable parts too after all.

I look at Shougetsu-san.

If it’s him who knows her directly, he should be able to serve as a measurement.

The result of the eye contact was a serious nod in return.

Okay, let’s accept.

“It is a grateful proposal. Then, is it okay to fight you now? Or do you have some sort of challenge in mind?” (Makoto) “Hahaha. I am an assassin, you know? Even if I were to fight against this many powerhouses up front, it is clear that I will be defeated midway. It is the latter. I want you to reach the 10th floor by tomorrow. You can, right? You have enough power to be called a monster after all.” (Rokuya) “With Alt floors and all?” (Makoto)

“...Haha, right. There were those. Understood. I will turn those off. No need to worry.” (Rokuya) “Off?!” (Makoto)

“If it’s something like that, there’s no problem in doing it temporarily. The one who wanted me to leave a message to you was the designer of Yaso-Katsui’s grand labyrinth after all. Him being there means that the last fail-safe has activated, in other words, it is a crisis for the grand labyrinth, but to tell you the truth, I don’t really feel that negative about it though. That extreme shut-in can be a pretty good talk when you speak with him personally. Seriously.” (Rokuya) “I see... eh?” (Makoto)

The designer of the grand labyrinth?!

I don’t really want to meet him though?!

I don't think I can have a good conversation with someone that has been a shut-in deep underground since forever(most likely).

Wait, Rokuya-san is not here anymore.

S-Since when?

I didn't notice at all again.

He nonchalantly said something dangerous like 'crisis for the grand dungeon'.

I only have a bad feeling about this.

"...What a scary one-ja na. Depending on the situation, he can seal our thought transmission, infiltrate in anyone's room without the person noticing, and disappear. Looks like this won't end in simple sightseeing. Well, Waka, he really got us there." (Tomoe) Tomoe, who doesn't really seem like she actually feels that way, only speaks heavily on her opening statement.

Moreover, the latter half sounded like she was having a hell lot of fun.

"Shougetsu, speak in detail about that person. Immediately, without hiding anything, and make it brief. Begin." (Mio) Mio doesn't seem to be in a good mood.

Looks like she doesn't see Rokuya-san in a favorable light.

This is of no importance, but I feel like saying everything without hiding anything while being brief about it is quite the difficult request.

Moreover, no questions asked.

"Ah, yes. Of course I will speak about what I know. Rokuya-sama seemed to be welcoming it after all." (Shougetsu) "I said brief!!" (Mio)

So strict.

It seems she won't accept any extra talk.

However, in the talk of Shougetsu-san that he began after being urged by Mio, there was something...Shougecking-I mean, shocking in it.

"Rokuya-sama is one of the people called the 'Adventurers of Origin'. It

seems like, in a long past, there were legends at every country about it, but now, most of those stories were not lost and still mostly remain at only the major power Lorel. Now then, I will be speaking of the legends and about my experience. Everything I know of.” (Shougetsu)

Chapter 261: Born question, born hatred

Before Lorel existed as an union, there was a guild called 'Apple' that had unparalleled power in this land.

Whether this is true or false, this existence called Apple that was made up of a few elites was supposedly the model for the Adventurer Guild.

This part is probably the result of a mixture of various stories.

The Adventurer Guild is something that was created by Root, and the origin of it was his first husband.

If I remember correctly, it was created when he was involved with Elysion?

...Well, that's only supposing Root isn't lying at all.

In his case, he probably has a massive amount of truths he hasn't spoken about, so I can't trust him at all.

But if we base trust on that, who knows how much I can actually trust Shougetsu-san about what he is saying of Apple and Rokuya-san.

After all, the 'adventurers of origin' are words that denote the members of Apple. Even if you have met with people that have the same name, it is hard to believe that they are the same people.

In terms of how it feels, it would be like...on the same level as Momotaro is to Japanese people.

Aznoval, Rokuya, Ginebia, Haku Mokuren, Hitsuna; it was formed with around 10 people, and their names are absurdly popular.

I heard there's a lot of epics and anecdotes of them.

I was told that Rokuya-san has left numerous stories of being a chivalrous thief as an assassin.

"It is incredibly hard to believe that the said person is still alive though..." (Tomoe) Tomoe's comment is natural.

Hyumans don't live that long.

When you reach a longevity on the level of Root, it is already to the point that you would question if they are immortal.

“Even if you tell me that he had the same age and appearance as the time when this Shougetsu-san over here received his training, its reliability is weak-desu wa.” (Mio) Seems like the perception of Mio didn’t pick up much.

That’s true.

It would be more believable if I was told that the name Rokuya was being inherited every generation.

“Haku Mokuren and Ginebia...” (Iroha)

Iroha-chan seems to be groaning.

Looks like what Shougetsu-san said just now wasn’t something he has told her before.

Apparently, she was busy with politics and learning things.

Simply means that nobles have it hard in their own way.

Having a fiance at her age is already amazing.

Even though she is at the age where a primary schooler knapsack would still suit her.

“Apple huh. Lorel really is a country that has a lot of stories that don’t circulate to other countries.” (Makoto) The Wise are the model example, but aside from that, I feel like this country is pretty secretive towards other countries.

Once you enter, the talks about it can be easily picked up, so I feel like it is a bit different from being secretive though.

Apple, the adventurers of origin, and then, there’s the reverence towards a dragon that’s not Doma, but one that’s name is Futsu.

It is truly a mysterious citizen nature.

“I truly have not met Rokuya-sama for several decades, but he said to go down till the 10th floor by tomorrow. It seems like his absurdities are still

going strong...no, it has grown stronger with time. Hm, but his appearance was the same as in the past.” (Shougetsu) Shougetsu-san has been looking nostalgic since a while ago as he reminisced Rokuya’s image.

As long as I am not kidnapped by Alt floors, we can reach the 10th floor by tomorrow.

That’s not a big deal, and if that’s his challenge, it overlaps with our original objective anyways.

Absolutely no problems at all.

“Hokuto, can you construct a route that reaches till the 10th floor?” (Makoto) I once again confirm with Hokuto who has been the number one person looking after the map.

And in reality, the 10th floor must have several different types as well, and there would be no point if we can’t go lower than the 10th floor after that.

In other words, it would be best if it is a 10th floor that has good prospects of continuing onto the 20th floor.

“Yeah, there’s no problems. That grand labyrinth has a troublesome structure where the number of teleport formations and the amount of types in that floor increase the lower you go and it becomes more complex as well, but...there’s a certain tendency it inclines to that can be used as reference.” (Hokuto) The first floor, Entrance, was crazy spacious place, but according to the Arke’s lecture on the labyrinth that even I can understand, the amount of floor types from the 2nd floor on increase steadily.

It is certainly true that if I look at Garden and the Alt floor that followed after, Entrance felt more spacious.

“Continue.” (Makoto)

“Yes, Waka-sama. Putting it plain, the higher the floor’s difficulty, the higher the possibilities of that floor to continue lower. If we take into

consideration the words of that Rokuya person, it would be more likely to throw us into the Alt floors if we were to pass those said floors fast.”
(Hokuto) I see.

The more difficult the floor is the more likely it is that it will lead to lower levels.

Since we have to reach the 10th floor in one day, I thought that being abducted by the Alt floors would be pretty troublesome so I enquired about it, but...Rokuya-san instantly said he would turn them off.

With those words into consideration, Hokuto had deduced the concrete conditions of being thrown into an Alt floor.

Yeah, I didn't read it that far in.

It seems like this time around we will be able to ignore them, so let's just be happy about it.

I think that's fine, yeah.

“Making a comparison of difficulties of each floor types, as long as you go down the most dangerous floor marked in the map, you will be able to definitely find the teleport formation for the next most dangerous floor. Since we haven't tested it yet, it will stay as a hypothesis, but I think it is plenty worth to try in tomorrow's plan.” (Hokuto) “Right. Then you are saying that we can continue on in the same route as today, and as long as we choose the most dangerous ones, it would be less likely to reach a dead end. What do you think, Tomoe, Mio? I am in favor of Hokuto's proposal.” (Makoto) “If it's something that Waka has decided on, there's no objections.” (Tomoe) “Same here. If Hokuto has proved himself useful, it is an honor-desu wa.” (Mio) “That's great.” (Makoto)

From tomorrow on, there's no worries of ending up alone, and we have established a route already, so I feel like we can advance to the 10th floor.

...No, I should head for even higher heights instead of being satisfied with only that.

The decision of which ones are the most dangerous floors can be done

by Tomoe, Mio, and I.

We will probably experience several dead ends even with that.

There's no need to waste time.

If possible, I want to return before an urgent message comes from Tsige after all.

"Hm? What's wrong, Iroha-chan?" (Makoto)

I look at Iroha-chan who nervously lifted her hand.

"I probably have met two of those Adventurers of Origin-desu." (Iroha)
"...Eh?"

"When I was betrayed by the adventurers I left together from town, I was saved by this person with a dancer-looking outfit named Haku Mokuren and a woman with a foreign country's priest outfit named Ginebia."
(Iroha) "...Princess... By the way, do you remember any other outward traits of those two aside from that?" (Yuduki) Yuduki-san who has been silent up until now, opened her eyes wide when she heard the words of Iroha-chan, and asks her more about their outward appearance.

A dancer and a priest.

Rokuya-san was an assassin.

I wonder what kind of party were the Adventurers of Origin.

"The two of them have silver hair; Haku-san is cheerful and refreshing, but a graceful woman. Ginebia-san is prudent, composed, and a kind woman. Both of them looked like they got along incredibly well, and they called each other partner. Both were adult women." (Iroha) A dancer and a priest calling each other partners.

It is a grouping I wouldn't be able to picture well.

Leaving aside the girl called Ginebia, I feel like the cheerful and refreshing part of Haku doesn't coexist well with the trait of being graceful.

"I have not met those two, but it is certainly true that their traits are the

same as the ones from the Ginebia-sama and the Haku Mokuren-sama from stories.” (Shougetsu) “Yeah, also...it matches too well with the Haku Mokuren-sama and Ginebia-sama that saved my homeland 18 years ago.” (Yuduki) “To think that the princess had met with them, moreover, you were saved by them.” (Shougetsu) Shougetsu-san and Yuduki-san seem to be pondering something.

However, a great amount of question marks were floating over my head.

I was thinking: ‘Isn’t 18 years ago pretty recent?’.

They were talking about it as if that were something normal, and no one is retorting to that. What’s going on?

Is it really a succession of names?

“Uhm, I don’t understand how people that appear in fairy tales are able to appear 18 years ago though.” (Makoto) I go ahead and ask.

“Ah, right. I haven’t spoken everything about that topic yet. To tell you the truth, the people of Apple continue to appear every now and then in Lorel’s history. Always, even in the present day.” (Shougetsu) “They continue appearing in history? Always?” (Makoto)

“There hasn’t been any records these decade, but it is just as said. I have not spoken much about it to others and it isn’t an incident that has much to do with history, but the most recent records of Rokuya-sama is probably when I was trained by Rokuya-sama around 50 years ago.” (Shougetsu)
“...”

I don’t understand even more.

Are they really immortal?

“Sometimes, when there’s some sort of crisis, they declare their names as people of Apple and cooperate in resolving the matter without having any feelings of self-interest and once again leave. For some reason, it is only in this country. It is one of the mysteries in Lorel.” (Shougetsu) “And you are saying their names and appearances are always the same?” (Makoto) Everyone from the Lorel group nod except for Iroha-chan.

They don't show any signs of joking. Instead, I sense a feeling that's close to worship from them.

Unbelievable.

Isn't this already in the boundaries of horror?

"What a strange story-ja no. And they are calling themselves the 'Adventurers of Origin'?" (Tomoe) "No, that's not it, Tomoe-dono. They don't call themselves in that way. It is just that, from the information we have of them, we decided on calling them that way on our own volition." (Shougetsu) "...What do you mean by that-ja?" (Tomoe)

"For example; the leader of Apple, Aznoval-sama, was a former swordsman; Rokuya-sama who you met not that long ago, was a former thief; the dancer Haku Mokuren-sama was a former archer; Ginebia-sama was a former apprentice priest; the blacksmith Black Smith had a history of being a merchant in the past." (Shougetsu) "Fumu, and?" (Tomoe)

"The present jobs of the adventurers, it is said that the basic form of those jobs and the ideas of those were taken as a reference from them, and in truth, that's exactly how it is...and there's not a single one of the Apple people affiliated with the adventurer guild." (Shougetsu) "...Hoh. It is true that it is interesting...but that's on the same level as saying 'which one was first, the chicken or the egg?' kind of thing, isn't it?" (Tomoe) "Probably. However, leaving aside things like a swordsman to a knight, and an ascetic practitioner into a priest; why is it that a thief grows into being an assassin, and why is it that an archer opens the path to being a dancer? Why is it that you can't get the smithing skills unless you are a merchant? We consider that the adventurer guild used the brave people of Apple as a cornerstone." (Shougetsu) "...I see. Hearing that, it can serve as a decent explanation, and it would be pointless to hear all of it. But...it might be possible they used them as reference. The Adventurer Guild is not something that Root would be able to create from the memories of only one person after all. And it is not like he can do the same things as me anyways." (Tomoe) Tomoe does a short sigh and begins thinking about something else, she turns her view away from Shougetsu-san.

Shougetsu-san looked like he wanted to continue speaking, and I ended up locking eyes with him.

Well, it seems to be interesting, so let's listen for a bit more.

“At present, in order to become a holy knight, you can't simply be registered in the adventurer guild and turn from a swordsman into a knight, you also have to pile up a certain amount of religious experience. It would be too late by the time you are a knight, and conversely, if a priest that has gathered enough religious experience tries to learn the way of the sword, they wouldn't be able to become holy knights. This is because the job branching alignments are different. That's what they have told us.”
(Shougetsu) “The job branching...” (Makoto)

I remember the online games I played at Japan.

Like high ranked jobs and branching jobs.

It is truly that way of thinking.

Swordsman to knight or holy knight; ascetic apprentice to monk or priest.

In those cases, no matter how much an ascetic apprentice learns the sword, that person won't be able to become a holy knight.

They wouldn't be able to equip a sword to begin with.

But in reality, you should have the freedom to decide if you want to begin learning the sword or endeavour in religion. Whichever the origin, you should be able to become a holy knight. That's what I think.

But that's not the case in this world, moreover, an organization called Apple gave an explanation with words like 'job branching', and in truth, there's a strange one way path in the jobs.

And then, there's the human-loving Root.

...

Is that how it is?

“But well. Haku Mokuren is called a dancer, but her job is actually Muse

Dancer; it is a job that the adventurer guild has not been able to confirm, an unknown job. Ginebia-sama's job is similar in that sense, its name is Over Mash; the other members are also the same, and are said to possess incredible power." (Shougetsu) Yeah, it is true that I have never heard about those.

Or more like, Ginebia-san is a priest, right?

Her job doesn't give me the image of praying though. Must be my imagination.

Iroha-chan did say that she is composed and kind after all.

"In that case, the abnormal presence of that Rokuya person, I should consider it a special skill? That technique that was on the level of changing perception itself. It was on a level I wanted to make it my own though." (Mio) Mio talks about that stealth of Rokuya-san.

Don't joke around.

Please let it be a super special rare unique skill.

An ultimate attack would be perfect.

With only the imitation of Reft's reflect ability, Shiki and Tamaki are already in tears.

"Okay! Anyways, I will be counting on everyone to work hard in the grand labyrinth tomorrow! And so, I won't be able to take much care of you guys, so Shougetsu-san's group, be careful. The whole town reeks of danger after all." (Makoto) "I will keep it to just the minimum information gathering. It is embarrassing to say, but we still haven't decided on our plan yet." (Shougetsu) "Let's at least be grateful that the hotel is safe." (Makoto)

"That's true."

"Then, time to sleep—" (Makoto)

"It is obviously fine for us to be first to the bath, right Shougetsu?" (Tomoe) Eh?

This pattern again?

“W-Well, of course. We are in your care after all.” (Shougetsu) “Good. Then, Waka.” (Tomoe)

“Let’s go, Waka-sama. We will be missing Iroha, so...Shii, you come. I will allow it.” (Mio) Huh?

“M-M-M-Me?!” (Shii)

Being suddenly thrown that, Shii fell into panick.

And I raised the white flag.

We two, who were being carried by Tomoe and Mio, were taken to the bath.

But Shii, if it were Eris who you respect so much, she would say ‘Yes, sir!’ without a single shred of hesitation.

As I thought, your roots are more similar to those of Akua.



“That face...did it not work, Rokuya-san?”

“Sorry there! He was an interesting guy, you know? You definitely gotta meet him! I have turned the Alt floors off for a few days, so take care of that, okay?!” (Rokuya) “O-Off. No well, I’m okay with that though. Trying to seriously manage them is a pain anyways.”

20th floor of the grand labyrinth.

For the people living there, this place has been called Rosegarden.

First floor Entrance, tenth floor Palace, and the twentieth floor Rosegarden.

These floors are floors that only have one type.

The light is taken in from the outside with a special method, so those floors are bright.

By utilizing this, you can do farming and also hunting.

That’s right. Rosegarden has no need for economic activity, it is completely self-sufficient.

If you wanted to, you would be able to continue living without influencing the world at all.

At a section of it, at the deep parts of the residential area, Rokuya was talking with someone.

“No well, I also think it is interesting. It has been a while since that has happened. But you know, at this time...it is just...”

“Even though he is a hyuman, he possesses power that surpasses that of humans. A pure breed Elf, a Superior Dragon and the Black Calamity disguised as hyumans, a child of the calamity, Iori’s favorite sword, and an Elder Dwarf. On top of that, one princess of Kannaoui.” (Rokuya) “...Is this the feeling of a super big event?”

“I have stopped joking about those kind of things, but...well, in the past, I would have said that. The people above ground are in that state after all.” (Rokuya) “More than half of that is because of the hero, right? If that’s the case, I am somewhat responsible for it, so I kind of want to do something about it though.”

The tone of the man that was talking about his connection with the hero was somewhat heavy.

“...What’s with that tone?” (Rokuya)

“If he is neutral, I would want to meet him, seriously. My standing right now is a bit complicated. Putting it plainly, if I were to meet Raidou, there’s one girl who would snap.”

“...I have not heard anything about that though.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya narrows his eyes at the words of the man.

From what Rokuya knows, the Kuzunoha Company and their employees have no bad connections with the members here.

“Right. It seems like the habitual actions of Raidou are not that good. Just like me.”

“It didn’t look that way to me.” (Rokuya)

“Do you know Pione from Rosegarden?”

“If I remember correctly, I spoke with her a few times. She was a diligent girl.” (Rokuya) Rokuya digs out the memory of a girl.

He met her recently; a bright, eager about everything, and an adventurer that has worked hard.

She entered the mercenary group, and has begun fitting into the residents of the 20th floor.

His impression of her was good.

“Yeah, her reputation around was good as well. Her ability was also decent. That girl’s close friend...got her head crushed by Raidou. Not that long ago.”

“...Oh. And that has been known by this Pione girl?” (Rokuya)

“That’s right. Pione herself brought that girl here, and asked me to release the charm of the Empire’s hero from her. And yet...she escaped in the middle together with her companions. The event with Raidou happened while Pione was in the middle of searching for them.”

“ ... ”

“Aside from the person herself, her other two companions were killed in an instant as well. Ah, the other two weren’t close enough to be called friends, they were more like acquaintances. Right now, Pione is...”

“Are you saying, not only will they not talk, they will end up fighting?” (Rokuya) “I won’t ask for the assistance of the people of Apple, and I also don’t have the authority for that anyways. It will probably turn out as you say. We are at home here and the Marikosans have increased a lot in numbers. On top of that, Picnic Rosegarden and I will be meeting the enemy. I am sorry for them but...we won’t lose.”

“Are you and the Marikosans going to mobilize as well?” (Rokuya) “When I was resting here, Pione took care of me after all. I am sorry for Raidou, but I will be taking her side.”

The words were said lightly, but it didn’t sound like a joke.

Even after hearing the battle force that Raidou possesses, he declared

that he will be opposing Raidou.

“This must be what people call ‘Fate’.” (Rokuya)

“It might be exactly that. If I didn’t know her, this wouldn’t have happened.”

“...But this is interesting!” (Rokuya)

“Hah?”

“Wouldn’t that mean I will be able to see something incredibly interesting?! I don’t know about the others, but I will...right, let’s take the disadvantageous side. Hahaha!” (Rokuya) “You say that with such ease.”

“I have been in worse situations than these after all. Also, I know about you, Raidou, and Vivi. Well, I don’t know much about Raidou though. But I can somewhat tell, you know. That things will settle somewhat harmoniously.” (Rokuya) “You are saying things similar to Azu-san. Could it be, you have been influenced by that person? I have my hands full with just one, so please spare me more.”

“Hahahaha!! You really have your way with words huh. But I feel the same way!” (Rokuya) A conversation that Raidou wouldn’t find amusing at all was being exchanged at the deepest parts of the grand labyrinth.

He will probably only notice that he was caught in an extra-large trap by the time he meets with his negotiation target who has already hardened their forces to attack.

The future of the Kuzunoha Company’s grand labyrinth exploration is still unclear.

Chapter 262: Danger is exactly one of the certain answers

–First floor, Entrance.

The place where all the divergences begin, and even though it is the starting place, it is also an important place that heavily influences the difficulty of the next floors.

As always, the venue is like a festival.

The variety of food is crazy, the number of people is also crazy.

If we are talking about a place in the grand labyrinth of Yaso-Katsui where the difficulty level is low and has a lot of tourists, it would be this place.

It is actually to the point that any mamono that appears is pitiful.

–Second floor, Garden.

Each one of the types are not as wide as Entrance, but looking around it, it felt like a space that resembled the outside.

The mamonos that appear and the terrain have their own traits, and the width of the difficulty degrees is incredibly wide.

The number one lowest difficulty is the introductory floor, its name is also pretty easy to understand: Beginner Garden.

In our second day, we left the guiding to Hokuto and the others, and the place we ran past through was the same as the day before, Drake Garden.

Well, if I had to put it in words, it would be like a nest of dragons.

–Third floor, Path.

This place is narrow.

But this floor is practically a highway, where avoiding battle itself is difficult.

The number of encounters increase and the exhaustion grows drastic as

well, so they normally have the cooperation of several parties and the sharing of exp.

The denominator gets bigger, so the amount of deaths here is obviously a lot higher than in the previous floor, and it seems to be the first wall that the beginners hit.

According to the information of Hokuto, if you enter this floor from the Beginner Garden, this third floor will be the Beginner Path and becomes a dead end.

Because of the Alt floor, this was my first time in this place, but for Tomoe and the others, this would be their second time here. We passed through the floor called Tribe Path.

It was a straight path with a number of halls; a monotonous floor. At the straight parts, it was a continuous battle with weak mobs, and at the hall parts, you would fight with a boss.

–Fourth floor, Valley.

Just as the name states, a valley. It is a floor that you have to advance through the bottom of a valley, and the field of vision is slightly dark.

The extent of actions you can take are limited like in Path, just that the enemies and traps were coming from all directions.

It was an attack from the sky.

It was mainly mamonos that have wings, and at times, there would be worm type mamonos coming for surprise attacks. It was also mainly traps falling onto us. That's what I thought, but at the end, the valley itself was narrowing on us and that had quite the impact.

When I heard the name of the floor was Negligee Valley, I can't deny I wasn't interested in it.

By the way, there was no pink anywhere, and the whole floor itself had some sort of debuff effect that reduces all your abilities.

...Just what part of it is negligee.

–Fifth floor, Maze.

This was exactly a dungeon.

A maze.

It was a depressing floor, but the pathway and ceiling was pretty wide, so there wasn't a feeling of confinement. That part alone was a saving.

Also, Hokuto properly constructed a route to the next floor, so we simply had to follow him and didn't get lost which played a big part in making me feel better.

There were armed goblins and Orcs, Lizardmen and Beast type mamonos appearing here, and the moment they found us, they would attack us with all they had, which made this floor a pretty hostile floor.

The floor's named Sword Maze, so there weren't many with blunt weapons.

The Boss-like guy was also a big sword.

A sword that's floating in the air and swinging at you as if dancing is already close to being a horror movie.

–Sixth floor, Hill.

It wasn't a hill at all. This is already at the level of a mountain.

I felt like they should change the name to Mountain.

We endlessly climb the unpaved path that was leveled by the steps of previous visitors while surrounded by overgrown trees.

We were being constantly attacked by wriggly mamonos that hide their presence and go for surprise attacks.

Only the Forest Oni, Shii, was more elated than normal in the middle of this arbour space as she spearheads, or more like, bats her way through the mamonos, turning them into minced meat.

Hide Hide Hill.

Just like the name states, it is a floor where it is hard to grasp the presence of the enemies, and that must be why the Hide is repeated twice. It is an important part after all.

But Shii's compatibility with it was extraordinary.

For a Forest Oni that can forcefully gather information from the trees, even when the beasts try to hide their presence, it was totally visible in her eyes, or so it seems.

And so, tragedy unfolded upon them.

Now that I think about it, what did Gonzou experience in the fifth and sixth floor that made him feel despair?

It was also the same with the other floors we passed, I didn't really understand that feeling of his.

-Seventh Floor, Hole.

A floor where if you didn't buy a map, gathered information beforehand, it would partially destroy your party or even wipe them out.

Well, after reaching this far, there shouldn't be that many people who are like that.

The moment you enter, there's a big pitfall.

Nothing to grab onto, there's not even a portal.

You simply fall.

And you get attacked by flying mamonos.

If you don't control your fall in some sort of way, you can have luck in passing the mamonos and then go splat at the end of the fall.

There's no device floating around or placed at the walls that can assist you with that either.

Going by the information of the map, there's practically no Holes where you can find gimmicks that can make you float or scaffolds you can hold onto.

This Great Hole is a place where you totally have to manage on your own.

In my opinion, I feel like it would be a lot scarier to make someone jump on their own will by baiting them with fake scaffolds, compared to having

them fall no questions asked.

At any rate, there's not much problems on our side.

And so, aside from falling into a big hole, there's nothing special to mention, and we all safely landed.

This time around, it did feel like a big wall you would hit –in a psychological sense.

–Eighth floor, Lake.

Location, a lake.

In other words, the romance of explorers.

I accept all objections you may have towards this statement.

This is a place that made me understand once again that we are deep underground. Ground and rocks in their natural splendor, and the bedrock ceiling that gave out a complete feeling of enclosed.

In that kind of space, the inside of the lake was releasing a gentle light like that of fireflies.

If we look at the whole space itself, it is on the level of being dim, and definitely not a light that you can define as dazzling.

But what was spreading from the lake was giving off a strong sense of presence.

There were a good amount of rocks, big enough for a person to jump on, floating on the lake.

Those were not the top parts of stone pillars, they were floating rocks.

If we take into account all the equipment, Shii, who is the heaviest in the party with weapon and all, would not sink. That's how much buoyancy it had.

The runner-ups Beren and Hokuto are obviously fine as well.

Just that, because of the size, it is hard to have two people jump on the same rock.

The portal is as always in a place close to the starting location, and at the center of the lake, there's a teleport formation leading to the next floor.

In these points, this is a simple floor.

It is easy to understand what you need to do.

Must mean that you need to trail the floating rocks and arrive at the center to continue on.

The mamonos were all aquatic type that live in the lake.

There were no attacks at land.

Leaving aside their presence, the mamonos that were jumping to the water surface as if aiming for flying bugs, their bodies were practically transparent.

Is it some sort of camouflage?

With that bad footing, and our actions limited a bit, handling the mamonos was quite the work. Moreover, at the middle of the stage, there were floating rocks that actually sunk the moment you jump on them, and you can't tell them apart from the others.

Tomoe wanted to go a lot deeper in one fell swoop, so she made a big jump, but the foothold couldn't stand it and Tomoe ended up dripping wet.

That probably pissed off Tomoe, she dove inside the lake and...after that, the underwater attacks had stopped completely.

Well, I can sympathize with that sentiment of hers, this is a floor that really stresses you out.

Clay Doll Lake.

If there's a next time, let's jump towards a correct foothold and finish it at once.

-Ninth floor, Gate.

In other words, a warping floor.

In this one as well, if you know the correct answer, the pathing is manageable.

Really have to be grateful towards the pioneers that cleared this place.

...Like, seriously.

This continuous warping that would make anyone go crazy, I don't have the intentions of testing every single one of them.

For some reason, Hokuto looked disappointed, but I completely ignore that.

The rooms aren't big by any means, and there's 4 teleport formations at the rooms, and each room isn't much different between each other.

It seems like a switch is what opens the door to the next area.

Name's Cube Gate, it is a simple floor, but that's exactly what makes it easy to get lost at and a troublesome place. Moreover, there's quite a lot of rooms where mamonos lie in wait, and after teleporting, it normally ends up in an instant fight.

It seems like Mio didn't find this place amusing. The mamonos that were waiting in ambush were mostly used to vent her stress.

After several tens of times, we found a corridor we haven't seen before, and when I saw that, I sighed in relief.

–Tenth floor, Palace.

This place's portal was filled with a number of teleport formations incomparable to the floors before.

It was an impressive sight.

It is not on the level of Entrance, but there were a number of groups divided and doing talks and discussions at the portal.

What is going on?

As we got closer, all the people gathered there turned towards our direction at once, and I felt somewhat uncomfortable by it.

This is...it felt like the eyes of someone that was looking at something

weird.

The image of the floor is also not like a dungeon at all.

No well, there have been floors like that before, but this place feels somewhat different.

That's right, we are indoors, and it is pretty luxurious.

If it is to take it relax, then this place is certainly good enough for people to gather.

Since these people were able to come all the way from the 10th floor, that must mean they have a decent amount of experience, so...they may have more useful information than in Entrance.

We register at the Portal as per usual.

And as per usual, the Obelisk emits a red light in return.

It is the sign that the registration was completed.

Okay, with this, we will be able to come to the tenth floor whenever we want.

We have also safely finished the task of Rokuya-san.

Everyone is...it doesn't seem like they are that tired, but with information gathering in mind as well, it should be okay to take a rest here.

It is already noon after all.

It should be a good time to have lunch.

“Welcome to the communal 10th floor, Palace. It is been awhile since I have seen new faces here. Nice to meet you.”

From within the crowd of people that were looking at us, one of them welcomes us and extends his right hand for a handshake.

Ah I see, it was because it's been awhile since new faces showed up huh.

I can understand that.

Since they know everyone's faces here, it is as expected, not a place that prospers much in change.

Leaving aside when someone dies, it is rarer to have people increase huh.

Also, the word communal 10th floor and this many people at the vicinities of the portal, could it be...

I respond to the extended hand of the man and exchange a handshake with him.

At the same time, I send a gaze at Hokuto and he nodded.

In other words, this Palace is a place where no matter what route you take in the previous floor, you will always end up here.

That's why this is a floor where people gather from every route.

"Nice to meet you. I am the representative of the Kuzunoha Company, name's Raidou. My companions are all employees, and they are: Tomoe, Mio, Beren, Hokuto, and Shii. It took us time, but we were somehow able to arrive here. Nice to meet you as well." (Makoto) "Company? No, that doesn't matter, you made it all the way here, so you must have actual skills. If you came all the way here in order to do business..."

"No, they don't have those intentions. Right, Raidou-kun?"

Right after I began the conversation with the man that seemed to have the strongest standing within these adventurers, a person that came from the crowd of people who opened the way for that person to pass, cut into the conversation.

It is a voice I am familiar with.

It is him.

"That's right. Today I didn't come here to do business. I didn't expect you to be waiting for me here, Rokuya-san." (Makoto) "...Rokuya?! The one from Apple? You must be kidding, right? He looks exactly the same as the picture I saw when I was a kid. Is he the real deal?"

From what I see, the man that was looking at Rokuya-san with wide open eyes is at least 40 years old.

Rokuya-san's outward appearance seriously hasn't changed at all.

Because of Rokuya-san's arrival, the surroundings get even more rowdy.

"Nah, I arrived just now. I was thinking about coming here early and notify the people here of you guys. It was completely out of my expectations that you would be able to clear all in half a day. Truly abnormal beings, monsters." (Rokuya) Rokuya-san seemed like he didn't care about anyone aside from us as he continues our conversation.

"Haha..." (Makoto)

"It is certainly true that with that level, not only would it be hard for normal adventurers, even the seasoned adventurers that challenge the World's Border would find it hard to learn from you guys. Even if you were to slowly guide them, instead of them having a strong spirit to learn and reach the level, it would most likely damage them. I see, I see. Now I understand." (Rokuya) "..."

For a second there, a light of pity showed in the eyes of Rokuya-san. And on top of that...a small dose of sympathy?

As expected, it is hard to read the emotions of the mild smile of Rokuya-san.

"Now then, you being here is proof enough that you have passed the task, but can you tell me about the floors you passed to reach here? Just as reference." (Rokuya) "Understood. Drake Garden, Tribe Path, Negligee Valley, Sword Maze, Hide Hide Hill, Great Hole, Clay Doll Lake, and Cube Gate." (Makoto) The surrounding noise gets lower and lower as I tell Rokuya-san the floor names.

"...Was the one who set up this route you, Raidou?" (Rokuya)

"No, it was Hokuto." (Makoto)

"I see. Was there some sort of meaning when he set it up? Ah, I am not talking about thread, okay?" (Rokuya) Hokuto looks at me to confirm if it is okay for him to talk.

I silently nod.

We have already finished our task and can obtain his cooperation.

I don't think there's any problem.

But, that Rokuya-san...was he indirectly telling us that he knows Hokuto is an Arke?

How scary.

Even at his first meeting with Tomoe, it seemed like he already knew her identity.

“...I noticed that, in this dungeon, the higher the floor's difficulty, the higher the possibility of that floor leading to lower ones. Of course, we could have moved through the floors that are not as dangerous, but it is more certain it connects to the next one the higher the danger; in that case, if it's Waka-sama and us, going through those would be the shortest and best option, that's all.” (Hokuto) “So that's why huh. There were also routes where the main theme is solving riddles and avoiding traps though. Is that a weak point of your group? More than half of the people here arrived here through those kind of routes, you know?” (Rokuya) Rokuya-san continues on the answer of Hokuto as if he was having fun.

“It is not like it is a weak point of us. But if we were to choose those routes, the amount of times we have to go back and forth is too much; a waste of time. For example, passing four types of second floors and gathering slates in order to challenge a special third floor, and after that, you would have to clear four types of seventh floors as well. In that fashion, we would have to do things like that more than 10 times before arriving here. The amount of floors we would have to pass would be too much. If it's the route I set on, we would only need to advance and pass the floor once. If we were to choose the route you talk about, it would have been practically impossible to arrive here in 1 day time.” (Hokuto) “...Well, I am speechless. It was a perfect answer. That is one of the ways to completely clear this labyrinth of Yaso-Maga—I mean, Yaso-Katsui. It seems like you guys will be able to safely arrive at the 20th floor without the need of our advice.” (Rokuya) Hokuto answered discouraged knowing that he was being tested by Rokuya.

There's no real problem in that, so I didn't say anything.

“Well then, Rokuya-san, Just as you promised last night, you will be our ally at the time of the negotiations, right?” (Makoto) I confirm just in case.

“Of course, I’m okay with that. I will keep my promise. But you see, after our last meeting, I learned about the details of the problem, and I gotta say...this will be tough. Of course, at the negotiation, I will be taking your side. I will, but...I don’t think I will be able to help you in creating the opportunity for that said negotiation.” (Rokuya) “What do you mean by that?” (Makoto)

A bitter smile comes up from Rokuya-san as if he was troubled, he is stuck in what to reply.

We can only wait for his answer.

Beginning with Tomoe and Mio, I could tell that my companions were slowly getting pissed.

Maybe his side has fallen into some sort of irregular situation.

“Hah... this is no good. No matter how I look at it, this will be difficult. The time is right, so how about lending me some of your time while we have a meal?” (Rokuya) “...Understood. It is already time for lunch anyways, so okay.” (Makoto)

One person outside our plans has joined the group.

We moved to a corner at the vicinities of the portal and began our preparations for lunch while being poured the fiery gazes of interest from the other parties.

We decided to take a rest as we have lunch.

Chapter 263: Gift from the departed

Dragon Slayer

“Are you talking about those girls?”

I hold my head.

The problem that Rokuya-san was talking about was heavily involved with me.

It was something that happened not that long ago.

At the time when I had my first proper talk with Shougetsu-san and his group, I was attacked by what looked like spies of the Empire.

And to my surprise, the three were girls I knew of before.

At the time when I visited Gritonia, those were the girls Tomoki offered me for Tomoe. They were all already at the brim with his charm power. They didn't oppose at all the fact that they were being treated as objects.

I heard from Tomoki that their levels were decent.

Even if I recently learned that their class was actually assassin, there was one thing I could tell, after looking at those eyes, I knew.....it was already too late.

That's why I eliminated them.

There were a number of people there aside from me, and leaving aside the moves they showed at the initial stage, looking at the sharp movements those three showed when they attacked me, they might have become a threat to Shougetsu-san and his group.

Even now, I still think that it was the correct choice to quickly kill them.

That's what I think, but...who would have known that one of those girls was a close friend of someone at the lower floors here.

That really got me, and it is problematic.

In other words, the first impression the mercenary group has towards me is the worst.

“Must be. I heard you crushed her head?”

“...Did I? If I remember correctly, I snapped the neck of one...ah, I did crush the head of one too. The last one, I flashily opened holes in her chest.” (Makoto) Don’t remember that well, but it was probably like that.

I restrained them with my Magic Armor and popped both of them, then finished it with Brid.

Yeah, that’s right.

Relying on the memories I recalled, I respond to the question of Rokuya-san.

Now that I think about it, thanks to being used to this kind of things already, I have become able to respond to this kind of conversations even when I am in the middle of a meal.

“You were attacked by a group of high leveled Shadowless, so I don’t think your way of handling the situation was to be blamed though. But that part, it seems like the concerned party is...unable to accept it. Fumu, it’s been awhile since I have eaten such good food. Where did you get it?” (Rokuya) Rokuya-san covers for my actions.

In this matter, I think anyone with the perspective of an adventurer would be able to understand me.

The person killed was a close friend, and on top of that, she went through the pains of separating that friend of hers from her companions and drag her all the way to get treatment, but in a second of negligence, that friend managed to escape, and right after, this incident happened.

It is not like I don’t understand her for not wanting to accept it.

“I’m grateful to hear that. Ah, today’s bento was made by us at the kitchen of the hotel, Rokuya-san.” (Makoto) “It’s a handmade of the Kuzunoha huh...” (Rokuya)

Rokuya-san suddenly fell silent and looks at the others beside me.

“And so, who was it specifically?” (Rokuya)

He asks me with a smile.

Looks like he liked it.

There's no person aside from the residents of Asora that have tasted the menu of Japanese-styled food made with things like soy sauce and dashi.

That's why I was a bit uneasy, but it seems it was unnecessary.

Because of the Wise of Lorel, the Japanese culture is thicker here than in other countries, and yet, for some reason, the food is drowned in Chinese style.

There's a seasoning here that's similar to soy sauce, but if I had to talk about it, I would say they are not the same.

In those points, Asora's ability to replicate is high.

This is not preferential view, I really think that's how it is.

"Most of it was done by Mio. Shii also helped out well." (Makoto) "Hoh, Mio-dono. Excuse me for a bit." (Rokuya)

Rokuya-san who was at my left side, moves to the right side where Mio was sitting, and when he places his face at around her shoulder, he suddenly began smelling her.

I could tell his nose was twitching.

"Truly a nice smell. Nostalgic even." (Rokuya)

On the other hand, the emotionless face of Mio instantly changed into an absolute zero smile and was going to stand up.

I hurriedly place a hand on her shoulder and stopped her.

With a bit of strength, I had her sit back.

It would be another issue if it were in a conversation, but violence in the middle of a meal would be troublesome.

"Rokuya-san, what are you doing so suddenly?" (Makoto) I ask his intentions.

It is not like he suddenly wants a wife that's good at cooking.

"No well, it was such splendid dashi, I ended doing this unintentionally.

Just as I thought, you are an excellent cook. You have that characteristic fragrance of many ingredients which good cooks possess. Truly splendid.” (Rokuya) “Fragrance, is it.” (Makoto)

Did Mio have that kind of scent?

Sadly to say, I didn’t sense that much.

But calling it fragrance piques my interest. Must be a nice scent.

Yeah.

“Ara. Leaving aside that you are a rude fellow, it seems like you are a knowledgeable one. If that was an action to confirm my cooking skills, I can turn a blind eye once.” (Mio) The anger of Mio was extinguished in an instant.

Maybe because there haven’t been much chances for her cooking to be praised by people from the outside.

And in truth, her skills have increased quite a lot, and if she were to be blessed by chances to show them out, the number of times she will be praised in this way will most likely increase.

At any rate, she looks happy.

It felt like, the moment she lets her guard down, her expression would loosen.

“No, I was impolite there. I am relieved that you have forgiven me. So Raidou-kun prefers it slightly strong, instead of kombu, you are more of the katsuobushi type huh. Having someone like her who would cook the things you like. You are truly a lucky man.” (Rokuya) Rokuya-san directed those incredibly kind eyes, he sometimes shows, towards me.

He was saying this while looking straight at me.

That’s true, but...

“Yeah, I am truly grateful.” (Makoto)

Now that I think about it, Rokuya-san called himself an assassin.

He greeted us with something dangerous like a bladed weapon last

night, and yet, why is it that he gives such a calming feeling?

Is it a trait of people that have surpassed their occupation?

“We don’t have anyone in our comrades that’s main job is cooking, you see. We do make our own food with individual quirks, but the basics are really important after all...” (Rokuya) “...”

It is probably a topic that I shouldn’t touch much.

In cooking, basics should come before individual quirks.

If not, terrifying things might occur.

It is like in Nabes .

Nabe is delicious, sweet things are delicious, cream is delicious; even so, that doesn’t mean combining the three of them will make it better.

That’s not how it works.

That is in no way an improvement.

“Oops, let’s put my matters aside for now. Anyways, sad to say but, the girl that had her close friend killed by you –her name’s Pione by the way- she is planning on having revenge on you. And so, the designer of this labyrinth, the Marikosan, and on top of that, the Picnic Rosegarden members from all sides are gathering in order to mediate this.” (Rokuya)
“...I see.” (Makoto)

A number of adventurers on the level of Rokuya-san, the designer of the dungeon, and the Marikosan...let’s leave those aside for now. Since we have come here with an objective, we can’t kill the mercenary group.

...But the chances it will end up in an unavoidable fight are high.

Hah...Isn’t the difficulty way too high? In a lot of meanings.

Pione-san, why did you have to be inside such an important place?
Seriously.

“...The girl called Pione has been a real help when this place lost Doma and a lot of things happened. Raidou-kun, you have been born under an unlucky star.” (Rokuya) Lost Doma and a lot of things happened?

That means...it is her, Sofia is the root of all this.

Gunununu, she really only does unnecessary things.

“That damn Sofia.” (Makoto)

“That was a woman whose presence felt somewhat like Root’s. Are you acquainted with her?” (Rokuya) “She picked a fight with me, twice. There...won’t be a next time though.” (Makoto) “I see. By the time she devoured Doma, she already had the power of several Superior Dragons though... Raidou-kun defeated her huh.” (Rokuya) “Just like in the matter with the Shadowless, she was the one picking a fight, so I had no choice.” (Makoto) “She was in part, a pitiful woman. If she has already died, I will at least pray for her happiness in the otherworld.” (Rokuya) “You are kind, Rokuya-san.” (Makoto)

Whether it was Doma being killed or devoured, it still created a lot of problems here, and yet, he still mourns over Sofia’s death?

“Wait.” (Tomoe)

“Hm? Is something the matter, Tomoe-dono?” (Rokuya) “Why is it that you know the name Root, and why is it you are saying it as if it were natural? Is it okay to question you about that?” (Tomoe) “Fumu, it isn’t really something that needs to be hidden anyways. I don’t mind. I am an acquaintance of that girl, Root.” (Rokuya) “Girl?” (Makoto)

I unintentionally cut into their conversation.

Root is currently a man mainly.

He did tell me that if I undress, he will become a woman anytime I want. By the way, I have no intentions of doing that in my lifetime.

But...Root has been a man ‘for a short while’ which is in the time sense of a Superior Dragon.

In other words...

“Looks like your relationship with the Myriad Colors Root dates pretty far in the past-ja na. In that case, I wonder how much of the legends about the Adventurers of Origin is actually true. I kind of want to hear it now.”

(Tomoe) "...What that Shougetsu boy told you guys, is...well, the truth. Fufu, I wonder why, when you guys arrive at the 20th floor, we will probably clash blades, it will most likely be a disadvantageous fight for you guys, and it doesn't seem like our relationship will last for long. That's how I think, but...a part of my heart currently is confident about something: 'we will continue our relationship with Raidou-kun, now and in the future'. How mysterious." (Rokuya) "We don't intend to lose either. No matter the situation, we plan on bringing it to a negotiation." (Makoto) "Even that recklessness, there's a part of me that is looking forward to it, and that's surprising. In that case, I will answer in kind as well. Of course, I will also answer to the question of Tomoe-dono just now." (Rokuya) And then, Rokuya-san sips on his after-meal tea.

The story of the Adventurers of Origin.

The origin.

Just what in the world are they really, just who this Rokuya-san in front of us actually is.

For a tea time, this was tackling quite the topic of conversation.

I decided to obediently listen to what Rokuya-san had to say.

Chapter 264: The transient braves

The Adventurers of Origin.

That was something talked about all around the world. It refers to the people that are called the ancestors of the currently existing adventurers.

They travelled through the whole world and helped out the people, and became the role model for the brave that came after. Of humans and demi-humans alike.

However, their names currently remain only in a small part of the Lorel Union.

Why is that? That kind of question popped.

Just like how Rokuya-san said about it not being anything hide about, he spoke about it fluently.

But he also said that this is not something we need to talk about in a room filled with people, so he began the talk after guiding us to a space that seemed to be a secret room in this floor.

When we entered the room, I felt something strange, as if we passed through a thin film. It was something slight that doesn't warrant much attention though.

It is probably something to make it so that even if we were to come here on our own, we won't be able to find it or won't be able to enter it.

Well, let's leave aside the topic of the hidden room for now.

I am still half in doubt, but it seems like this Rokuya is actually the one from the legendary Adventurers of Origin.

In other words, immortal.

It is not that they are always awake and active, they live in a style where they wake up every now and then and move, and have been living like that for a long time.

Honestly speaking, I wouldn't be able to imagine a life like that.

At this moment, I felt like Rokuya-san and the other people called the Adventurers of Origin are existences I wouldn't be able to comprehend.

Living for eternity.

How does that feel?

If I were forced to choose between death or immortality, the current me would probably...choose death.

If it were longevity, it would be a different story, but immortality...

Even if I become immortal, my surroundings will definitely continue dying.

I kind of don't like that.

"Well, and so, we ended up cooperating, and that guy Munemori not only got the trust of Root, he even married her, and founded one of the nations that would be counted as one of the five major powers, Elysion."
(Rokuya)

"There's still quite a lot of anecdotes remaining about the foundation of Elysion, and the dragon princess that appears in those, I could somewhat understand that it referred to Root from the talks the person himself told me, but...there was no mention about Apfel(Apple), you know?" (Makoto)

By the way, this is my first time hearing that his husband was a person named Sou Mamoru.

If I remember correctly, he was a swordsman.

And after building up his country, he began liking love affairs.

...I feel like this part of his subtly overlaps with Tomoki.

But well, there was no information regarding charm, and Root said his husband didn't have those kind of powers.

"Yeah, we were erased from history after all."

In those days, it seems Rokuya-san's group called themselves Apfel, which is written as Apple.

It is a name I have no recollections whatsoever.

It seems like Lorel remembered them as Apple instead of Apfel, and called them Apple and people of Apple.

“Era...sed?” (Makoto)

It sounded conspiracy-like. Ominous words.

Moreover, Rokuya-san is one of the affected parties, and yet, he doesn't seem to be blaming anyone.

“You see, Munemori revealed it to Root. About us...more accurately speaking, about the power of our master.” (Rokuya)

“Your master's...” (Makoto)

It seems like Rokuya-san's group, the Adventurers of Origin, have a leader they call master.

But rather than a relationship of one being in higher standing than the other, it sounded more like another word denoting a friend.

What's with this.

I myself...feel like I have a relationship like this.

“Not only Munemori, us as well, the heroes, and also you; when coming here, you received a power, right?” (Rokuya)

“Yes...eh?” (Makoto)

“For example; Munemori received ‘the Sword of Ambition, Desire’ and ‘the Sword of Oath, Damocles’. A cheat sword that responds to his will and becomes stronger without the need of a blacksmith, and...the sword of resolution that you make an oath and as long as you protect it, all of your abilities are raised. The second one, in the case that he broke the oath, he receives a big wound, so it wasn't all merits though.” (Rokuya)

“Ehm...” (Makoto)

“And in my case, it is a bit special, you see. I can't talk in detail about the second one, but the first one is a bit different from norm, an ability that links my comrades.” (Rokuya)

“ ... ”

In other words, Rokuya-san is –no, all the Adventurers of Origin are... Wise?

And as if natural, it seems he also sees through me as well.

But what is this second one he is talking about?

In my case, I was summoned by a God, and at that time, I received [Sakai] from Tsukuyomi-sama. That's the only one I got.

Don't tell me, is the language comprehension of the Goddess that she jammed inside of me also counted?

Is that the second one?

...Seriously?

“Us six came here at the same time, and noticed that we had acquired an ability. And the one who was able to exercise that ability was master. That's why...yeah, link would be the correct understanding of it.” (Rokuya)

“Link ability.” (Makoto)

Six.

If that's the case, at least they wouldn't be lonely. Even if they had come to a terrible world.

But this link ability, I don't really understand it well.

“Ah, that's the ‘Blood Pledge, Guild Verse’. Don't know what sort of fate this is, but we were companions in an MMO –or so to speak, an online game– we played in those days. And our abilities were connected with it. What a joke.” (Rokuya)

“...Ah, a net game.” (Makoto)

So that's what it is.

Rokuya-san and his companions, and then there's the master .

Guild comrades in an online game.

I see.

“The details of it are...to put it in an easy to understand way for you, it

would be the reproduction of the online game system. Well, strictly speaking, it is different though. In other words, from a novice, I can hunt mamonos and change my job to thief, and after that, assassin, and further after, I can decide on a specialized job...it is that kind of setup. There's also a shared warehouse that other people can't see, side quests, and other fine details in the ability." (Rokuya)

It is truly a guild.

And this entered the ears of Root, and that's how the current guild was established.

They are truly the adventurers of origin.

No lies in their name.

But from what I have heard until now, I don't understand the meaning behind them being erased from history.

It doesn't explain the point about the immortality either.

"In other words, it is that right? Root took the idea of the Adventurer Guild from the ability of you guys? If the information of Root's husband was about that ability, that's plausible but..." (Tomoe)

It seemed like Tomoe was putting it all together, but at the same time, her eyes were saying there's more to it.

Rokuya-san silently nods.

He continues.

"Yeah. Root took an interest in the structure called a guild, and tried to replicate it. It is certainly true that she heard about Guild Verse from Munemori and got the idea. But the part that would serve as the core, in the end, she was unable to create it." (Rokuya)

"Eh?" (Makoto)

That's strange. In the end, he did create the guild and is the guild master.

And in present, Root is still the guild master.

"Even if she is the heavenly dragon Root that governs over a percent of

the world, as expected, there's no way she would be able to grasp the essentials of the Earth's pc online games. She desperately gathered information from me, master, and the other members." (Rokuya)

"That...must have been annoying." (Makoto)

To the point you would want to call the police.

"Nah. Even if she was a dragon on the inside, her appearance was that of a peerless beauty. The three men counting me actually enjoyed it, you know. Root was aggressive, she wasn't as stubborn towards one person like Munemori, she let us enjoy without any hesitation." (Rokuya)

"I...I see." (Makoto)

Eh?

Could it be, I'm quite the herbivorous?

Or is it that, Root had quite the appeal in the past?

Judging from the atmosphere in the story, not only Rokuya-san, the other two members also enjoyed it.

I am currently receiving a culture shock here.

Rokuya-san is a Wise –though I don't know from what era he is– he must be a japanese person.

If he is a person of the Showa era, were the men of that era this indiscriminate?

In that era, did they dig in when a woman made advances on you?

Seriously?

"...By the way, I was born at the end of the Showa era. I don't think our perceptions are that different, Raidou-kun." (Rokuya)

"A...Ahahaha..." (Makoto)

Did he master mind reading?

I am blocking the magic type, and there's no signs of him probing.

My expression as well, I have lately been able to hide the things that

show on my face.

“It looks like you are not self-aware of it, so this might be a good chance to tell you. You are a late bloomer. There’s a limit to being herbivorous. It has been several years since you came to this world, right? In age...you are already over twenty huh. ‘Sleeping with somebody will only be with the person I have decided to marry for the rest of my life’, that kind of ideal is so far from reality it is close to being a delusion, you know? If you are being desired, it is fine to desire as well. That’s all there is to it, and there’s no need to think too deeply about it.” (Rokuya)

He looks at Tomoe, looks at Mio, and even looks at Shii, and then, sighs and points a finger straight at me as he said that to me.

Shii is also okay with you, Rokuya-san?

It is true that I am an adult, but that’s clearly already crimina—no, let’s leave it at that.

“No well, you see, it is been a while already, so there’s things that are just hard to advance towards...” (Makoto)

“...Are you seriously saying that? Going through the trouble of finding a partner for one night would be just... there’s two women at both your sides that are practically shouting that they are ready anytime you want, right? If you are at a lost, if it’s those two, even if it is the two at the same time, they would probably not complain, you know?” (Rokuya)

“Rokuya-san! You are going too far.” (Makoto)

“...”

What is this person saying.

I hurriedly object as I look at the two.

Tomoe and Mio are obviously angered...or not?

Oh.

...

On the contrary, Mio was stealthily giving a thumbs up to Rokuya-san.

Her face is slightly red.

Tomoe didn't say anything, but she was nodding and going 'Umu Umu'.

No well, it isn't as if I didn't know, but...in the past, the figures of Hasegawa and Higashi were definitely bigger than Tomoe and Mio.

Then, if asked now, it would be about the same, or actually...

But if we were to cross the line, I feel like a variety of restraints will be broken.

Thinking about my determination of returning to Japan wavering and disappearing...honestly speaking, I am scared.

And in reality, whether it is Rokuya-san, that Munemori person, and the Adventurers of Origin; they have all stayed in this world without returning.

"...Fuh... Sorry. It was probably not something for me to talk about. Let's return to the main topic." (Rokuya)

"...Sorry." (Makoto)

"It is fine. And so, Root thoroughly researched about us and Guild Verse, but it didn't bear fruit. However, Root thought that an adventurer guild was a necessary existence in the future of the world. Just as her attitude showed, she wasn't the type who would obey the Goddess after all."
(Rokuya)

"Yeah, Root is like that. I think his stance is different from that of the Goddess." (Makoto)

I can tell by the fact that he is thinking of things like thinning out the humans.

So Root has been like that in the past too, and Rokuya-san had noticed that way of thinking Root had.

"That's why..." (Rokuya)

"..."

Rokuya-san slightly narrows his eyes.

“Root has already diverged from the Guild Verse system, and she is trying to make it a permanent existence in this world.” (Rokuya)

“In other words, it means that Root is trying to make it possible for the Adventurer Guild to have your ability as well?” (Makoto)

“Yeah. But for the sake of that, he needs the cooperation of the Goddess, and more than that, there’s the need for our cooperation as well.” (Rokuya)

“Right. Leaving aside the Goddess, the cooperation of you guys would definitely be a necessary.” (Makoto)

“However, the price that was asked for was way too big. You probably already have an idea but...for the sake of that, all the people related to the Guild Verse ability are required to live forever. If the Wise die, the ability goes with them after all.” (Rokuya)

“?!”

“That’s why, a lot happened, Raidou-kun. By the Goddess, Guild Verse became the core of the Adventurer Guild, and we became immortal. But you see, a problem was born in this.” (Rokuya)

“Problem?” (Makoto)

‘Yeah’, Rokuya answers with a bitter smile.

“At that rate, our achievements would be way too big. Moreover, the Adventurers of Origin are immortal. I was a charismatic person in those days, you see. If I wanted to, I would have been able to become the king of a major power.” (Rokuya)

“Obviously. Receiving immortality, bringing the Adventurer Guild to this world; those are achievements that would surpass a king of a major power.” (Makoto)

“That’s why it was inconvenient for Root. Her unyielding wish was for Munemori to be the greatest brave of that time. Fufu, in the end, she beared the child of Munemori. Even if she was a Superior Dragon, it was her first time having a child. She went wild probably because of the

maternal instincts that were suddenly born in her.” (Rokuya)

“Maternal instincts have nothing to do with that. That’s way too much of a selfish wish.” (Makoto)

“Hahaha, right. It is just as you say, Raidou. But this is not something that’s happening now, it is all history that was settled thousands of years already. Also, it is not the history of winners, you know? It is the history of people that are fading away. It is not something for you to be so riled up about. In the first place, I who am one of the related parties don’t feel anger towards Root.” (Rokuya)

“Why?! If what you have done is true, then that bad treatment of Root would be similar to what the Goddess did to m—!!” (Makoto)

“No matter the sequence of events and the conclusion of it, the Adventurers of Origin became a minor fairy tale of Lorel, but Root has been able to properly maintain the Adventurer Guild in this thousands of years.” (Rokuya)

“ ... ”

“The humans growing haughty was in part the Goddess’ fault, and even Root wouldn’t be able to stop that, but a diverse amount of demi-humans and a narrow amount of demons have been able to survive until today. It is certain that she has been able to carry out her role in the Adventurer Guild which she fervently spoke of in the past.” (Rokuya)

“ ... ”

Even so, there are things that can’t be forgiven as well.

Being forced immortality, and have your existence erased, that’s just...

“That’s why, the Adventurers of Origin, as well as I, have accepted most of our circumstances already.” (Rokuya)

“‘Most’?” (Makoto)

“As troublesome as it is, the one man that has to accept it the most, is still fighting against it. And so, at that time in the past, there was one kind dragon that was enraged by this, just like how you are, Raidou-kun –no,

that rage was even higher than yours.” (Rokuya)

Dragon.

Could that be...

“A dragon, you say? I don’t think there was anyone who would be able to fight against Root in the past. At the very least, I don’t know of one.”

(Tomoe)

Tomoe tilts her head.

I see.

Leaving aside if both of them have met before, Tomoe was alive at that time as well.

She learned about the Guild when she heard of it from Root, so she was probably asleep at that time anyways.

“No surprise. In those days, the other Superior Dragons aside from Root and Futsu didn’t boast much strength after all.” (Rokuya)

“As I have said, I don’t know of a dragon named Futsu-ja. It seems like it is known widely in this country, but who in the world is that-ja?” (Tomoe)

After a brief silence, Tomoe seeks an answer from Rokuya-san.

It is certainly true that the name Doma is spread in Lorel Union as well, but the name of Futsu surpassed that.

And Doma is being seen as a dungeon’s Superior Dragon, but it felt as if Futsu was being directed something like reverence.

It felt like the kind of reverence they direct to Spirits and the Goddess.

“The Ancestral Dragon of Heavens, Heavenly Dragon Root; directly opposite, the Ancestral Dragon of the Land, Land Dragon Futsu. The matchless Superior Dragons that possess the highest of powers, however, Futsu was against the creation of the Adventurer Guild, and...as a result, its power was snatched away by Root and was terminated.” (Rokuya)

“?!!”

“This is a matter of Superior Dragons. It is a top secret matter that

would be bad if Root knew, so Raidou, please keep it a secret as well, okay? After that, its existence was thoroughly erased by the hands of Root, even more thoroughly than in our case. That was way too pitiful you see. We saved it.” (Rokuya)

“As I thought, I don’t know of it. If we are talking about a land dragon, it would be Grount, right?” (Tomoe)

“More accurately speaking, that girl is a Sand Dragon. Can’t be helped, we are talking about Root here. She probably persistently chipped off the memories of Futsu from the other Superior Dragons every time they were dormant or were reincarnating. It was probably easier than erasing the Adventurers of Origin from the history of people.” (Rokuya)

“That damn Root...” (Tomoe)

“If Futsu had acted as how it normally acts, the situation wouldn’t have gotten so screwed. In the end, whether it is people or dragons, what decides things is most likely emotions over logic. Fufu.” (Rokuya)

Rokuya-san was probably reminiscing the events of one thousand years ago, he laughs.

Even though this was their defeat.

Receiving the curse of immortality and having their existence erased from history; that’s right, it is supposed to be a defeat.

And yet, is this really something that one can look back at it a thousand years after and laugh?

I...probably will end up fighting them at the floors below the tenth.

Since they are immortal, there’s only one way to beat Rokuya-san and the others, I have no choice but to break their will.

No, Tomoe and Mio are probably already investigating this immortality of Rokuya-san.

If possible, his memories of it as well.

That’s probably the reason why the two aren’t speaking much and simply look like they are listening to the story.

There's the possibility that there will be some sort of way to break through this situation from what they might figure out.

But...the will of people that are able to accept defeat in this manner, if I have no choice but to break it, just how am I going to?

Is it breakable?

I currently...don't know.

I felt something heavy slowly accumulating in my stomach.

Chapter 265: The despicable acts of the sleepless city

“Oops, we ended up talking quite a lot. Well then, let’s continue the conversation when you arrive at the lower floor. But well, that’s only if it still ends up that way even after trying to do our best to kill each other. Hahaha, anyways, I will be waiting in anticipation.” (Rokuya) Rokuya-san said this and leaves.

It is true that we talked about a variety of things.

But how to say it...the important parts were made vague.

That’s the impression I got from his story.

I sweep away this feeling of mine.

He probably hinted to it when he said that we would be continuing at a later time.

Right now, there’s one thing I can say for sure, my impression of Root worsened quite a lot.

...By the way, it wasn’t good to begin with.

“I am sorry, Waka. Just like before, I couldn’t read his memories.”
(Tomoe) Tomoe reports to me mortified.

It seems like it somewhat succeeded with Tomoki, but as I thought, it doesn’t work on everyone.

There’s people with high resistance towards it, and there’s a variety of spells that serve as countermeasure against this.

Senpai and Tomoki should be getting stronger by the day.

In that case, in the future, the memory vacuum probably won’t work that much on the Japanese people.

In a sense, the only way for her to get information of Japan will be from my memories, and that will most likely depress her.

...I see.

We can't confirm how much of what Rokuya-san said was true huh.

It brings me down a bit.

But everyone has surplus in their stamina, so let's continue a bit further for today.

We don't know how accurate the map will be in the floors that follow, and we also don't know how much we can progress.

No matter how my mental state is in, we should continue on.

Since we will be mapping on the way, our speed won't be the same.

"It is fine, don't worry about it. But this is a problem. Telling us to do our best in killing Japanese people that have become immortals. This is a situation I wouldn't have been able to imagine at all before coming to Lorel." (Makoto) "At worst, we would have to go against five people with strength on the level of Waka. This certainly wasn't in our plans.

Depending on the situation, we might have to make you guys return to the 19th floor." (Tomoe) The first half was directed at me, the latter half was directed at Beren and the others as she lets out a slightly heavy sigh.

"Rather than on my level, they might even surpass me. Right...it is true that having Beren and the others fight together with us would be a bit..." (Makoto) "I have been prepared since long. The Adventurers of Origin are certainly higher than us, but who knows how strong the mercenary group and the dungeon administrator will be. We are three here. We will definitely serve for something. Please let us stay this way." (Beren) Beren does one step forward and interrupts my words.

Right.

There's other people aside from Rokuya-san's group, like the dungeon administrator -or wait, was it dungeon designer?- on top of that, there's a big number of Marikosans.

From what I saw, these three are plenty enough to fight against the Marikosan.

For example; even if we look at Beren alone, he is a skilled craftsman

even within the Elder Dwarfs. There's a lot of combatants that are attached to their equipment. The trust he has between his comrades is also deep, and he has a good relationship with the other races as well. He is also beginning to become an irreplaceable existence in the company.

Shii as well, if we were to exclude the problematic part about her admiring Eris, she is a dependable Forest Oni. Her fighting skills, forestry skills, and her agricultural skills regarding bananas are high. She is one of the few power fighting styles within the Forest Onis which is important too.

Regarding Hokuto, he was a powerful Arke to begin with, and at present, the things he can't do are less than the things he can. He himself has a hand-to-hand combat style that utilizes strings and is researching in order to reach higher heights in it, but in the process, he has created several byproducts. All the Arkes are immersed in the field they themselves have decided on, and the work they are given are reliably done. No need to say, he is an important man of talent.

I don't want to lose them.

...Now that I think about it, I suddenly remembered something that Shiki told me quite a long time ago.

It was when we fought together at the Limia capital.

'If you are about to be too entranced in a fight, please have the people of Asora in a corner of your mind', is what I think he said.

This will certainly be a tough fight incomparable to the one at that time.

I think I am able to control myself quite better now, but who knows what will happen.

Daikokuten-sama also told me something unreasonable. 'Don't incline too much on your emotions and logic'.

But I wonder what he actually meant. Maybe he meant that as long as I live a normal life, it will not incline to any of those, so don't worry. Or it might be that if I am not careful, without noticing, I will end up inclining in either of those, so watch out.

As expected of a God, the things he says are complicated.

“Calm down. The right person in the right place, that’s all there is to it. Tomoe-san as well, what worthless things are you saying. Even if we bring Hokuto and the others, they won’t get in our way, and just like they said, they will do their best. If that’s the case, they will definitely show one or two results that will bring a ‘well done’ from Waka-sama-desu wa. Right?” (Mio) I won’t let them die.

“It is as if you are telling them to become meat shields if it comes to the worst, Mio.” (Tomoe) “Don’t jest. I am simply saying that they should show Waka-sama how the weak ones can also fight in their own way-desu wa.” (Mio) “Honestly speaking, just thinking about being attacked by a presence concealment on the level of that Rokuya in a group battle, I know that even I can’t let my guard down.” (Tomoe) “Fufufu, like we would let him.” (Mio)

Oh, Mio, did you think up something?

“Hoh? Are you saying you have some sort of plan?” (Tomoe)

“No.” (Mio)

So you don’t...

“What, so you are planless. That confidence without basis of yours, is it that? Is your instinct telling you that?” (Tomoe) “I haven’t thought of anything special, but there’s no way Waka-sama will let his companions die in the same battlefield he stands in. He definitely won’t forgive that.” (Mio) ...Yeah.

“...”

For some reason, Mio was filled with confidence.

On the other hand, Tomoe didn’t say anything and was at a loss for words.

Right after hearing what Mio said, Beren and the others straightened their backs and their faces turned meek.

Wait, I am the one who will be doing it?

Well, she is right though.

I did decide already that I won't be letting them die.

I am a bit embarrassed knowing that she saw through me though.

...Yeah, it is just as Mio said.

Beren, Hokuto, Shii, and Tomoe and Mio as well; I...wouldn't want the people that are fighting for my sake dying in a battlefield where I am in.

Even if the fight below is unavoidable, this will not change.

My objective was not 'making the immortal Japanese yield'.

It was something a lot different.

Bring back the mercenaries to Tsige without losing anyone.

Yeah, the fight below will have that objective.

Things like our opponents being immortals, japanese, the owner of the dungeon, or designer, or administrator; well, whatever it is, that's not a big problem.

I am even thinking about fighting against the Goddess -a God-, so why am I getting worried here.

If we win this fight, we will get one step closer to checkmate.

"Fufu, ahahahaha!! Right, it is just as Mio said. Let's all go. I won't let anyone die. Now then, first we gotta get there or we won't advance at all! Mapping, exploration; honestly speaking, I am bad at both of those, so I am counting on you guys!" (Makoto) Curse of immortality, long experience, and companions that most likely trust each other.

I was subconsciously held down by the things that Rokuya-san was shouldering.

But then, what about me?

I have Asora, Tomoe, Mio, Shiki...and there's Tamaki too.

Also, even in the long experience of Rokuya-san's group, I don't think they have experience in challenging the Goddess.

And haven't been overpowered.

Just like always, if they point their swords at us, we just have to sweep it all away.

“My my, you are making me jealous here. It seems like I will have to let all these out in our afternoon exploration. Let's depart. You guys, put some spirit into it... but well, looks like I don't even need to say it-ja na. From now on, the amount of labour division will increase. You understand, right?!” (Tomoe) “Yes!!”

A response with good strength.

They have faces that ooze motivation.

Looks like there's no need to motivate them again.

First, let's gather information regarding the three teleport formations that lead to the 11th floor and then discuss about it.

In the end, Rokuya-san didn't tell me a single thing about a method to advance in the lower floors after all.

Please, let there be no confined and damp place.

Thinking about something shameful that differs a lot in temperature compared to the determination just now, we resumed our exploration.



In the end, we continued our exploration till before evening and arrived at the entrance of the 14th floor.

We divided the labor and explored the different types of the floor, the strength of the mamonos, its size, the traps that are set up, and after gathering the information, Hokuto, Tomoe, and Mio analyzed it and decided on the course to take.

We advanced in that way, so we didn't go as far as we expected.

At this rate, if we count any irregulars that might happen, the X day will probably be the day after tomorrow, or the day after that one.

The motivation of everyone was pretty high, and the divided labour was

finished without delay.

Everyone, thanks.

“Even so, this city is mostly sleepless. Tsige and Rotsgard were the same as well.” (Makoto) In this world, it is truly rare to see a town where the hustle and bustle doesn’t die out late at night and there’s no lack of lights on.

The nights are dark, inconvenient, and dangerous.

That’s why, a while after dinner time passing, the towns enter silence waiting for the next day to come and is enveloped in darkness.

That’s the usual.

Tsige is at a wasteland, Rotsgard has an academy, and here, a grand labyrinth.

When there’s something special about the place, it ends up in an uncommon place like this?

But well, in Rotsgard’s case, the one that didn’t have its lights off was the Academy, so if I were to choose, I would say that the liveliness here resembles that of Tsige.

Right now it is...around 2:00 a.m.

It is late in the night.

And yet, the doors of the store are open and receiving customers.

I could hear the noise of people in good mood at the inside.

Now that I think about it, the World’s Border and the Grand Labyrinth are always there, so it is probably natural that it turns out this way.

By the way, the reason why I am walking alone at this time is...not that big of a reason.

I opened my eyes not that long ago and noticed that there were several people missing in the room.

And well, after searching with Sakai, I learned that a number of them were at the grand labyrinth.

I was wondering what was going on, so I decided to go and see.

...It is not like I was agitated because the moment I opened my eyes, the sleeping face of Mio was right in front of me, or that the leg of Tomoe was on top of my thighs.

Definitely not.

Now then, the ones who were gone from the room were Beren, Hokuto and Shii, and there's also the bodyguards Akashi-san and Yudoku-san.

But Akashi-san and Yudoku-san were investigating in the city, so maybe they simply haven't returned yet.

That's why, the ones currently at the room are Tomoe, Mio, Iroha-chan, Shougetsu-san, and the maids.

We will be exploring tomorrow, so what are Beren and the others doing this late in the night.

We have already paid for the entrance fee of today, so there's no problem—hm?

Now that I think about it, how are the days set in this place?

Is midnight the mark for the next day?

At sunrise?

What a problem. I currently don't have money at ha—ah, it is fine.

I do have a decent amount.

Even if they ask me to pay, there's no problem.

We will be entering tomorrow anyways, so this will be a simple pay in advance.

Well then, let's chase after the three that disappeared inside.

Oh?

Are those...Akashi-san and Yudoku-san?

At a slightly further road that's connected to the grand labyrinth, I coincidentally saw those two.

If I remember correctly, that direction is the area where the rich live in, Blue Jewel Zone.

I guess the place by comparing with the map of Kannaoui in my mind.

Those girls are the bodyguards of Iroha-chan to begin with, and Iroha-chan herself is the daughter of a family in the ruling strata of this city, so going to a place like that shouldn't be strange.

The Osakabe household is like the feudal lord of this whole city after all.

I look at the grand labyrinth.

It is certainly true that I am bothered by Beren and the others.

...But I don't feel that uneasy about it.

I look at the bodyguards.

They are giving off an atmosphere differing from usual. The two move towards a place that doesn't have much people.

...I am uneasy.

Can't be helped.

Let's grasp the movements of those two.

My first time walking this path in a city I don't know. Moreover, it is late at night.

If I didn't have Sakai and wasn't confident about my skills, I definitely wouldn't have thought about following them.

Looks like Akashi-san is guiding Yudoku-san somewhere.

I observe the state of the two and try to grasp the situation.

This is something that I should be reporting immediately to Shougetsu-san, but...my relationship with Akashi-san and Yudoku-san is not that deep, and there's a lot of things I don't know about them.

Because of my face and appearance, I was caught in what seemed to be people trying to rob me, but I politely had them rest.

"A bar huh. It is an establishment that reeks of suspicious." (Makoto) I

mutter this in front of the door where the two entered.

It seems like it is still open, but the door is not open.

This place doesn't give me the atmosphere the sign is telling me.

"Hm?"

The scent inside the bar reached my nose.

A deep and strong fragrance that reeks of a night store.

But this is...not only that!

"It really doesn't make me happy that my instincts hit the mark in this kind of things, seriously!" (Makoto) Being certain that my uneasiness wouldn't end with unnecessary worry, I resolve myself and opened the door.

Chapter 266: The identity of the scent

Ugh.

A thin layer of smoke hangs over the store's interior.

As I thought, an unpleasant smell is spreading.

It is an atmosphere that makes me wince a little.

For now, I ignore the mostly negative gazes that were being poured on me and search for the two I came here for.

It is not a big store, so I was soon able to find the back figure of the familiar two.

But it looks like I will have to hurry.

As I approach the two in fast steps, the more I could tell the state of the two.

This is bad!

Akashi-san is trying to open a small bottle for Yudoku-san!

...She opened it!!

Damn it, I didn't make it in time.

...Now that it has come to this, might as well...

Go with the plan I previously had in mind.

"Azusa."

I mutter in a low voice and call for my habitual bow.

At that moment, a sense of touch was born from my left palm, and I grab it.

No arrow prepared.

Without giving time for the customers to panic, I take stance with my bow, enhance it with magic power, and pluck the string.

"?!!"

With me as the centre, the smoke and smell that was hanging over the place was blown away.

A whirling wind spread while leaving the store's interior.

Looks like I managed to do it well.

Since the time at the Demon race territory, I haven't held back much, so I didn't know how much to hold back here. Well, as long as the result is fine, it is okay, I suppose.

The bottle that Akashi-san had in her hand fell and broke.

The liquid that was staining the wooden table made one long strand down and quickly evaporated in a thin smoke.

From what I can sense, there's no 'smell' remaining there.

Of course, in the interior of this store as well, and of course, it disappeared from the 'inside' of these customers and employees too.

Good grief.

That guy is beginning quite the outrageous thing.

So he doesn't care about my warning.

The matter with the guns, and now this.

I remember the insides of the bottle and the smell inside the store.

Leaving aside the concept of it, it is the dangerous type.

...That damn Tomoki.

"Hey there, Akashi-san, Yudoku-san, what a coincidence." (Makoto) Even I know there's no coincidence in this.

But still, I thought that there was no choice but to do so in this place.

Smoothing things over is not in my list of skills, so please forgive me on that one.

Akashi-san had a dumbfounded face as she looked at me.

...After looking at what happened, it can't be helped.

It seems like Yudoku-san is trying to hold back her agitation.

She is looking at me with a somewhat stern face.

Looking at her tightened lips, she probably has noticed something already.

“...Boss Raidou, why are you here?” (Akashi)

“Yeah. You can’t fool us with that coincidence talk. I heard that you would be busy with the labyrinth for a while.” (Yudoku) “Yes. In truth, more than half of it can be called a coincidence though.” (Makoto) “That means there’s a part that doesn’t apply in the coincidence, right?” (Yudoku) Yudoku-san still has that stern face.

At present, I have become somewhat knowledgeable about things like medicines and magic medications.

However, just like how charms serve the same purpose as talismans and amulets—wait no, the comparison wasn’t that good there. Charms are mostly turned into amulets and talismans are—wait, why am I beginning a lecture here.

What’s important here is that the magic medication that Akashi-san had in her hands was not the type for medical treatment and it was a type I still wasn’t familiar with.

I can understand it roughly, and I know the objective of Tomoki, so as long as they don’t ask for a deep explanation about it, there’s no problem.

The problem is, how am I going to tell them.

On top of that...

I look around the establishment.

Everyone was making a face as if they had been tricked by a fox or a racoon as they were trying to grasp the situation.

Doesn’t seem to be a good place to continue our conversation.

It enters in the area of private talk, so...at this moment...that place would be best.

It would be two birds with one stone after all.

“Yeah. Looks like I will have to get involved in the trouble of the top brass. Now then, it is already this late, so how about you two accompany me to the labyrinth?” (Makoto) I can protect the secret, and if there’s anyone following us, we can easily lose them.

And while at it, I can search for Beren and the others as well.

It should be okay to talk in the grand labyrinth.

“I see. A place suitable for private talks, right?” (Yuduki) “Y-Yeah...” (Makoto)

Yuduki-san slightly widens her eyes and whispers as if impressed.

She is nodding, so it should be fine to take it as her accepting.

Akashi-san was looking alternately at Yuduki-san and I as if she was half asleep.

“Then, let’s go.” (Makoto)

“Understood. Akashi, we are going.” (Yuduki)

Yuduki-san had Akashi-san stand, and leaves the store as if dragging her.

I leave some change at the store and depart as well.

At any rate...that Tomoki, to think he would turn his charm into a drug.

What an outrageous thing to think of.

If Senpai learns of this, a war between humans might occur before the war with the demons ends.

Hibiki-senpai would probably try her damndest to stop it after all.

However, it is an incredible idea.

If you are not at his side, the charm will have no effect to begin with, and if you know of its existence, there’s ways to go against it.

Of course, completely shutting it out will depend on a battle of strength though.

It is strong, but in a sense, it is an ability that has its restrictions. That's how I thought.

But putting the charm ability in a tool and spread it around in that way will dramatically increase the effective range. Moreover, that tool is a perfume. It diffuses around the area like incense.

The compatibility with the charm is quite good.

For the side that tries to prevent it, that's a lot worse than placing an accessory on the target.

You can't just stop breathing, and you will have to take in mind the direction of the wind at all times.

In the first place, there's quite a lot of spells that can control the wind.

That guy...seriously only has brains for the most hopeless stuff.

I am impressed.

Leaving aside the fight between Naoi and Kannaoui, and the competition between all the Osakabe; right now, the currently occurring fight of the Osakabe has Tomoki or the Empire involved in it.

In the end, it seems like I will have to get involved with this city.

My head is already hurting with matters of the 20th floor. Good grief.

Without being able to find a solution for it yet, I follow the two and enter the labyrinth.



Fourth floor of the grand labyrinth.

In the deepest place that the two bodyguards can go to, we take one big breath.

There's no trace of Beren and the others.

At this rate, I can see that they are at a lower floor than this.

Just what in the world are they doing?

The three don't seem like they needed to increase their level though.

Even in the floors after the tenth, they worked pretty well.

“Now then, if it’s around here, there should be no one to hear us. You two, it seems like you didn’t return to Iroha-chan’s place all day long. What were you two investigating?” (Makoto) Leaving aside Yudoku-san, I am interested in what Akashi-san has to say.

The origin of that bottle.

I don’t think Sairitz-san is involved in it, but I am interested in how far of the Osakabe household this has spread.

“...We were...investigating about a certain influential person that has the highest probability of aiming for Iroha-sama’s life.” (Yudoku) “So, an opposing faction of Iroha-chan huh. I see. And who is this person?” (Makoto) “How to say it, rather than calling it an opposing faction, it is more like that person is the one who holds the true authority at the Osakabe household at present. Iroha-sama doesn’t really hold that much authority.” (Yudoku) Now that I think about it, I did hear that they are unrelated with the matter of the successor.

There’s already a political marriage settled.

She is being married off, so I thought she would be treated somewhat importantly, but it looks like that’s not the case.

And Yudoku-san, you are not going to tell me the name?

Well, if that person has that much authority, I can learn who it is by investigating, but...going through the trouble of doing that is a pain.

“And, who is it?” (Makoto)

“I would be grateful if you catch on that it is hard to speak of.” (Yudoku) “Now now, it is Boss Raidou here, so isn’t it fine? The one that Yudoku was investigating was Tatsuki Kougetsu. He is one of the people serving long at a responsible position called chief minister in the Osakabe household. In words that a foreigner could understand...it is like a cabinet minister? Ah, Boss is a Wise, so maybe you understand it already?” (Akashi) Chief minister...

I don't know how much of it is the same chief minister I know of, but if it's what I think of, I can tell that he has quite the authority.

However, he is not a person from the Osakabe household?

“Akashi!” (Yuduki)

“It seems like he saved us there in some way. We have to return the favor. There's no need to be frugal about the information we currently hold.” (Akashi) It is a saving that Akashi-san has a light mouth, in a good meaning, It seems like Yuduki-san already doesn't mind it much.

In Lorel, you first say the family name and then your first name, so... there's a high chance that this Kougetsu-san is the one pulling the wires.

Hm? Kougetsu?

“Kougetsu...” (Makoto)

I mutter the name as a question pops in my mind.

Looking at my state, Yuduki-san sighs as if she gave up and speaks.

“He is the brother of Iroha-sama's retainer, Shougetsu-sama. And then... it seems like he has his attention on the Kuzunoha Company as well. Be careful.” (Yuduki) “Even us?” (Makoto)

“You entered the country with such an extravagant promissory note, so it most likely caught his eye. The name of Kahara-sama and power of influence reaches even Kannaoui plenty enough.” (Yuduki) “The promissory note huh...” (Makoto)

I didn't expect this to have power on the level of a seal case.

Speaking seriously, with that, I can walk around in joy inside the country even without a wallet.

I feel like it will turn into a big debt towards Sairitz-san, so I will never do it though.

So that made him lock onto us huh.

No, since there's Tomoki, I can't just assume that was the reason why.

Let's tread carefully.

But the one that actually had the bottle was Akashi-san, so the chances of Kougetsu-san and Tomoki joining arms is a bit weak, probably.

“Akashi-san, who were you investigating, and...where did you obtain that perfume-like bottle from?” (Makoto) “Me? To tell you the truth, I don’t remember well. A part of my memories are hazy.” (Akashi) “Hah? Akashi, what are you saying? Didn’t you say that you had caught on a connection that would definitely overturn the current situation of Iroha-sama?” (Yuduki) She doesn’t remember.

In other words, she had become a puppet of that incense in the middle.

“Eh? Did I say that? Or more like, Yuduki, having a meeting at such an establishment, you have bad taste.” (Akashi) “I’m shocked. You said you had found a place that we could use as a safe hiding spot. Saying that, you brought me to that establishment.” (Yuduki) “Eh?!” (Yuduki)

Akashi-san’s memories have turned vague.

Is it because of the after-effects, or maybe self-defense?

If it’s the latter, I am sorry for this, but I will have her remember it in order.

With Yuduki-san’s cooperation, that should be possible.

“Yuduki-san, you remember that Akashi-san was the one who invited you to that establishment and entered it, right?” (Makoto) In this cases, you shouldn’t think about opportune moments and just go straight for the jugular.

“Of course. It is true that it is a place that doesn’t have much people, but it also didn’t strike me as having a good clientele.” (Yuduki) “You also remember the bottle?” (Makoto)

“Yeah. She said that it was some sort of symbolic incense somewhere and that there was the need to make copies of it for investigation.” (Yuduki) “But Akashi-san doesn’t remember.” (Makoto)

“Y-Yeah... By the time I came to, Boss Raidou was calling to me.....That’s certainly weird.” (Akashi) The charm of Tomoki shouldn’t be able to alter

the memories.

At the very least, that perfume and scent didn't have such power.

Then, she should be able to remember.

"Yuduki-san, what were the plans for Akashi-san today?" (Makoto) For now, I leave Akashi-san who is in confusion, and ask Yuduki-san.

The two were investigating as they contacted each other.

In that case, she would be able to know the actions of the other side.

"The major point was that she was going to create a connection with a certain someone. An incredibly important person for Iroha-sama and is currently—" (Yuduki) "In short, who is it?" (Makoto)

"...The state of Akashi was certainly strange. It is certain that a turbulent movement is approaching us. It is not the time to be keeping secrets." (Yuduki) "I share the same sentiment." (Makoto)

Maybe because of her character as an information gatherer, she has a principle of keeping secrets tightly.

But currently in this city, I don't think there's much meaning in keeping secrets from me.

Good grief. Trust is complicated.

"Haruka-sama; Iroha-sama's mother." (Yuduki)

"...That's right. I...had caught on the whereabouts of Haruka-sama, and then...she invited me to the Kishimo temple." (Akashi) Invited?

No, right now the priority is to have her remember her memories in order.

Let's keep silent.

"What did you say?! You met madam?!" (Yuduki)

"Yeah... And then, I was led to a room with a nice scent. And I think there was also a chamberlain that had skills that that were not average..." (Akashi) ...Hey hey.

An even worse presentiment surfaced in my mind.

“Where?! Which Kishimo temple?!” (Yuduki)

“Uhm... At a place of the Osakabe branch family where there’s several houses, in a place that was being used as a family temple. The one that’s at the Silkwork street, right, it was there.” (Akashi) “Akashi! Well done! You are a genius!! With this, Iroha-sama will be happy as well! I see, so that scent was the symbol of that place!!” (Yuduki) ...

This is bad.

This is incredibly bad.

A bad presentiment is steadily growing.

It is like the time when I saw the wife of Rembrandt and his daughters. It felt as if that melancholic feeling would overflow through my throat.

If possible, I felt like running away from this place.

“And so, I was told...by Haruka-sama. She said that there’s something she wanted to give to Iroha-sama and that she was asking of me to do it. And then, she entrusted me a small bottle. That’s why, I...for the sake of master, I thought that I had to tell Yuduki as well. Wait, who is master?” (Akashi) “Akashi?” (Yuduki)

...

There’s no doubt that the source of the charm incense is the Empire.

Even if we still don’t know where and how far it has been spread to.

In that case, the reason for the dispute in the household, and the puppets of Tomoki I killed; the reason they escaped from the treatment in the middle of it as well, maybe it has something to do with that incense.

If a patient for drug poisoning is given the drug once more even if only a little, it is clear that it would be as certain as the sun rising that the treatment wouldn’t progress properly.

And then, this incense is currently, at the very least, invading the mother of Iroha-chan.

From what I have heard of Akashi-san, there's no doubt that the spreading side is also affected by it.

From what I see, I think Akashi-san is somewhat safe.

But that Haruka person, it sounds like bad news.

The word 'too late' surfaced in my mind.

"What a disgusting feeling. I feel like I might puke out all my happy memories." (Makoto) After recalling my memories for a while, Akashi-san who had an ashen face was muttering contradicting words as she staggered to a wall.

And then, an expected sound rang out.

But it probably won't end with just that.

She will probably have a hangover with self-disgust added to it, and will taste what will probably make even a three day hangover look cute.

But it is probably a blessing that she was spared with 'only that much'.

"Kugh... Raidou-dono, did anything come to mind?" (Yuduki) "Yeah, a number of things. First of all, that bottle Akashi-san had and the scent that was hanging over that store was a scent that had a charm power packed in it. Smoke and perfume, to make it easy, let's call it charm incense." (Makoto) "Charm incense..." (Yuduki)

"It seems like it was packed with a strong charm power that makes anyone who smelled it into a slave of a certain man." (Makoto) "Could it be that was the reason why Akashi said something as foolish as master?! I see, Kougetsu!!" (Yuduki) "No, he is not the one the charm incense enslaves you to." (Makoto) "...Eh?" (Yuduki)

"Iwahashi Tomoki; the Empire's hero. The charm incense is...a tool to create his slaves." (Makoto) "Hero?! T-Then, are you saying this matter was not a simple dispute of the household?! Is that what you are saying, Raidou-dono?!" (Yuduki) "Probably. I still don't know what he is planning though." (Makoto) "I remembered one other thing..." (Akashi)

Akashi-san returns to the conversation still with her ashened

expression.

If it's information about that temple, anything would be fine.

It would help out.

“At that place, I think...there was Kougetsu-sama and a number of the princesses as well. Ugh...” (Akashi) Don't you have any information that might change the situation for the better?

At the lower floors, there's a girl that hates me lying in wait.

And above ground, the charm of Tomoki has become the seed of strife.

What a time to come to Kannaoui.

I wonder if I can go with everyone to the grand labyrinth in the morning.

Maybe I should just call Lime or the Forest Onis as well?

Even if I call them, it doesn't mean that it will erase the fact that it is already too late, and in the end, things will turn out as they will.

At the very least, we can stop the victims from expanding.

Hah... what a loser's thought.

DAMN IT!

Tomoki, and Sofia; they just do unnecessary things all the time!

Especially Tomoki!

Doing something as stupid as charming people you don't even know. I'm impressed he even thought of it.

AAAH, my head is hurting!

Chapter 267: It was preparation

“The sky is already graying. Hah...looks like this was an all-nighter.”
(Makoto) At a place a little further away from the entrance of the grand labyrinth, returning to the portal that let's you go to the floors you have already been to, the far away sky was faintly changing in color.

It might be a bit fast to call it gray.

The main point is that it was an all-nighter.

Now, I will return to the hotel, arrange my thoughts on the current situation, and practice with the bow for recreation... yeah, there's no doubt it will be morning by then.

It is true that I can go without sleeping for several days though.

Must be thanks to my youth.

In just this kind of times, I honestly think it is great that I am young.

Normally, there's quite a lot of times where I feel like I am lacking in experience and lacking in ability as well, so there's not many times where I get happy about being young.

“Well then, let's return to the hote—huh?” (Makoto)

I call both Akashi-san and Yuduki-san who used the portal together with me.

Before, Akashi-san had an ashen face and had a hand on the wall with her face facing down breathing heavily. Then, how is she now. Her face is ghastly pale and Yuduki-san is lending her a shoulder.

Can't be helped.

Since then, her muddy memories were slowly returning, and had remembered what she did and for whose sake after all.

For the sake of a master that she has not seen yet, Akashi-san was trying to increase the amount of comrades. Trying to reel in Yuduki-san, Iroha-chan, Shougetsu-san and the others.

Moreover, as if rubbing salt to the wound, the one who ordered this was the person that seemed like she would become a strong and dependable ally, Iroha-chan's mother, Haruka-san.

There's a lot she can't simply swallow.

She was looking for her in order to have her become their strength, and yet, not only was she lured, she was forced to change sides.

"I...what have I done..." (Akashi)

"Akashi, just think about returning and getting rest." (Yuduki) But Akashi-san is still the better one.

Even when looking back at her memories, the time she was charmed was not that long.

She hasn't hurt people willingly for the sake of Tomoki, or killed anyone yet.

That's why...she probably can still return.

I think it is fine.

Those three that I killed have long since killed people for his sake.

If those three were trash to begin with and didn't think anything about it...I probably would have thought they were still saveable.

But those girls were not.

They were all girls that had strong conviction and ideals.

That's why it was 'too late'.

There's no point in dispelling the charm.

Even if it is dispelled, as long as there's no miracle occurring, in the end, they will just...

...

Eh?

Why was I able to tell all that in that one instant?

Hmm...did the power of Tomoe flow into me again?

It happens every now and then.

Even though it would be pretty useful if I were able to activate it at will, I still am not able to.

Yeah, I could tell.

When I once again look back, I could roughly grasp the memories –or maybe it was the knowledge– of those three and also their upbringing.

If I had to put it in words, it would be as if a drawer I didn't know of had been stealthily added in my own room. A strange sensation.

Those three were originally the daughters of nobles in the Empire.

They held deep concerns towards the current situation of the Empire, especially in the relationship with the surrounding countries, and did their best to try and bring their points to the center of the Empire in a fair and square manner.

But it was the misfortune of them that Tomoki was in the Empire at that time.

Ah, so this is the Pione person.

It is certainly true that if she is like this, she would definitely hate me.

I have killed a close friend of hers after all.

Or more like, to think I would see the face of the woman called Pione in such a manner.

Even though I haven't met her in person, her figure was already inside my head, and have already seen her laugh, cry, and get angry.

Truly a strange feeling.

“Monster huh. It is true that I am steadily straying from the boundaries of a human being. Even I can tell that.” (Makoto) “Eh?”

“It is nothing. Let's go—hm?” (Makoto)

I unintentionally mutter the word that the gazes that are normally directed at me say.

Yuduki-san sharply reacts to it, but I just wash it away.

It is not really something to tell others after all.

The moment I was going to urge them to return, familiar presences appeared from the portal.

Oh, it really is the two birds one stone.

“Now, let’s return. If we don’t return to our beds while it is still dark, we will create unnecessary worry.”

“We somehow made it.”

“Sniff sniff, this is black. A black hole, you know? A bottomless pit, you know?”

It seems like the three are in a hurry.

One of them looks incredibly reluctant.

“Beren, Hokuto, Shii, what are you guys doing so late?” (Makoto) “Geh, Waka-sama!”

...

He seriously went ‘Geh’.

“You’re not gonna say you went to the labyrinth to train, right?”
(Makoto) “Ah, no. Uhm, you see...” (Beren)

Unclear words came out from Beren.

“How should I explain it...” (Hokuto)

Hokuto is the same.

“In my case, it was practically kidnapping.” (Shii)

Shii’s words were clear, but it is not the answer I am looking for.

“Beren?” (Makoto)

I once again ask.

I am not really angry. I simply want to hear what they were doing.

My tone is not severe since the beginning.

“If I had to put it in words...it is embarrassing to say, but it is like preparation.” (Beren) Preparation?

Hokuto also nodded at the words of Beren.

Shii was discouraged and sighed.

I should try asking the continuation from her.

“Shii, what were you guys doing?” (Makoto)

“Thanks for asking, Waka-sama! Those two were cruel. They tied the opposing me in a tortoise shell style and kidnapped me into the dungeon.” (Shii) “?!!”

“Hoh hoh, and?” (Makoto)

For now, let's leave aside the talk about tortoise shell and kidnap, and see what she has to say.

From what I see of the gazes Beren and Hokuto direct at her, there must be some sort of reason behind this.

“From what I saw...the last part today was...pretty tough for us. Mainly for me and Beren-dono. But from tomorrow on—wait, that's today? Ah, my sleep time!” (Shii) “Continue.” (Makoto)

“Even so, if we were to bring the masterpiece series of Beren-dono, we might damage the labyrinth, so we decided on gaining experience first by going beforehand.” (Shii) “Uhu.” (Makoto)

“Beren said that we should prepare ourselves beforehand in order to accompany Waka-sama and the others. And so, it ended up in us leaving at night.” (Shii) I see.

Well then, let's hear about the kidnapping and the tortoise shell since I have the chance.

“I see, I understand. And so, about the kidnapping...” (Makoto) “I said ‘I haven't gotten serious yet, so it will be fine’ and tried to go back to sleep! I would probably be able to manage somehow tomorrow after all. And yet, Hokuto-cchi used some sort of tying technique, tied me up in an instant, and forced me to go to the labyrinth!” (Shii) “Shii, it is fine. It seems like

you were bothered by it, but you were plenty slim and light, you know. There's no need to get anxious about your muscles. I think it is attractive.” (Hokuto) “Shut up! I don't know whose suggestion it was, but repeating the same thing over and over again doesn't work, okay?!” (Shii) ...So Hokuto was the one who carried her there.

And he made a follow-up by saying she was light.

He has said those words several times already, moreover, Shii should be angry about the kidnapping.

This is derailing.

Well, in this kind of aspects, I can't say much about others.

“Waka-sama! We are truly sorry for doing something like this without your forgiveness! But please, please bring us to the labyrinth as well. We will definitely—” (Beren) “Of course, that's what I was intending to do, Beren. My feelings have not changed at all.” (Makoto) “!”

“I am looking forward to the results of your preparation. However! I won't forgive any recklessness that might affect your health. Understood?” (Makoto) But well, looks like it was my misunderstanding. I thought we had easily arrived at the lower floors.

Beren and Shii were actually beginning to feel it tough.

If I believe in the words of Shii, apparently, she can still manage in the next exploration without any preparation though.

And Beren as well, if he were to bring his treasured equipment without any restraint, he would have plenty leeway.

He has quite the outrageous equipment, so even I can tell.

But it is probably difficult to use them around this place.

To take into consideration the well-being of the labyrinth, or take into consideration the well-being of Beren; there's no need to place a balance in which one is more important.

I will have him redo the selection of the equipment he will be bringing, and have him do his best as Beren ver. 1.1.

I wouldn't want him get injured by doing too much of those preparations.

From what I have heard while we were walking to the Chihiro Man Rai restaurant, Hokuto doesn't really have much difficulties in battle, but it seems the high pace exploration and mapping at the same time was beginning to prove difficult.

It seems he also thought that Shii required the preparation for tomorrow.

Looks like the three had their own places of concern.

I am probably the one who should notice these kind of things and do follow-ups for it.

We can have Mio help in the mapping, and regarding the weapons, we can reselect it to the ones that are best suited for the labyrinth.

And about Shii, we can have her get some advice from Akua and Eris.

The cordial backup of Asora is one of our big strengths.

Inside the labyrinth, a part of that strength is restricted, but it is not like we are always inside the labyrinth anyways.

We have to properly make use of it.

"Thank you very much!!"

"Same here, it is a big help that you guys are doing your best. Thanks."
(Makoto) As I grew aware that my consideration towards the company's employees was not enough, we returned to the hotel.

Even though it is this time of the day, the moment we entered, quite a good amount of people welcomed us which surprised me a bit.

Chihiro Man Rai restaurant is impressive.

Are they active at full force 24/7?

Temple Avenue.

When going to the deep parts, you will find quite a good amount of temples of Lorel's Spirit religion, and there's one Kishimo temple there as well.

This underground area, where there's no average temple, was currently being used for something different from religion.

But for the people that use this place as a stronghold, it is not that it is different from religion, it might be called a new religion.

A new existence that should be loved and revered.

It is the headquarters for the people that have been taught and are spreading the existence of the Empire's hero, Iwahashi Tomoki.

"Looks like Akashi has failed. I still don't know the particulars, but the communication with Manju was severed."

At an underground hall where there's purple smoke floating around, a report was being relayed.

Manju is the suspicious bar that Makoto had stepped into not that long ago.

The woman that was listening to the report shook her head to the sides in sadness.

"I thought that I would finally be able to teach Iroha about that person. As I thought, it wasn't something to leave in the hands of the inexperienced Akashi."

"Haruka-sama..."

"Look for a chance, in as peaceable manner as possible. There's no need to hurry. It is not like there's anything that girl, who has not stepped into a ruling position and doesn't know left from right, can do. And, if Akashi is not dead, retrieve her. She should still have her uses." (Haruka)

"Understood."

"Seriously, if we offer the people and the control to Tomoki-sama, everyone would be able to live in happiness. My daughter is really a troublesome one. Not knowing is truly pitiful. Don't you think so as well?"

(Haruka) "Yes. A life without knowing of Tomoki-sama is just worthless."

The informant responds to the words of Haruka as if it was obvious.

There was no hesitation in her eyes and no doubt in her words.

Words that came from her innermost depths.

As if saying she was also of the same opinion, Haruka smiles.

"Is this what they call 'the pleasures of subordination', Haruka?"

"...That's unrefined, Kougetsu-sama." (Haruka)

"If I don't interject here, it will once again end in foolish racket."

(Kougetsu) "Are you denying the love of Tomoki-sama?" (Haruka)

The eyes of Haruka that had been gentle until now, were now showing sharp hostility and bloodlust.

The man that had just entered the place, Kougetsu, shrug his shoulders and shakes his head to the sides.

"No way. You have heard already, right? I am the one cooperating with Tomoki-sama. In other words, your ally. What I wanted to say was that you should do what needs to be done before drowning as much as you want in that love of yours." (Kougetsu) "What has to be done, huh. This city, the settlements in the surroundings, the real power of the Osakabe household; isn't it almost all in your hands now? I as well, for the sake of showing my love to Tomoki-sama, won't be frugal about my cooperation with you, Kougetsu-sama." (Haruka) "That's what I am talking about, Haruka. The problem is that it is 'almost'. It is not complete yet."

(Kougetsu) "Men are always hurried in that way. If we continue further, as long as the father of Iroha doesn't die, it cannot proceed. We have to make him die in a natural-looking death so that even Sairitz doesn't suspect anything, or it will turn troublesome." (Haruka) "...The father of Iroha, huh." (Kougetsu)

Haruka's manner of speaking makes Kougetsu narrow his eyes.

Because he felt two meanings behind her not calling him her husband.

The first one is that he is not the 'true father' of Iroha; and the other is

that he was certainly one of the people she loved, and yet, she said it as if her relationship with him was far away.

(In those days, everyone in the Osakabe's authorities knew of their blighted love, but...the charm of the hero is truly scary. Once she fell to it, she happily did things like revealing the father of Iroha was the current head, and continuously prescribed medicine that was actually poison and would definitely not be discovered.) (Kougetsu) Kougetsu himself doesn't wish to cooperate with the Empire.

He is currently resisting the charm of the hero and is utilizing the Empire. After grasping the real power of the Osakabe household, he plans on eliminating everyone, beginning with Haruka.

The effect that the power called charm brings about, Kougetsu properly felt it as a threat.

“Yeah, her father. Wait for only a few months. And then, feel free to make the children that you have influenced into the head of the family. You can take one of the princesses here and make her the successor for you to control. The problematic thing has been dealt with, since they have already been taught to love Tomoki-sama.” (Haruka) “Haruka, you also know about the irregulars called the Kuzunoha Company, right? Thinking about his connection with Sairitz, there's no doubt that they have some sort of aim with the Osakabe.” (Kougetsu) “Is that your reason for hurrying? You can just leave those kind of guys alone. The circumstances of Iroha are well known. And in turn, the things that Kuzunoha Company can do are also limited.” (Haruka) “So you are telling me that it was a complete coincidence that the only girl in the Osakabe household, who has not been caught in the charm, has come in contact with a foreign company that is connected with Sairitz, and that I shouldn't worry at all about it?” (Kougetsu) “Yes. The situation has advanced plenty. We have already won. There's no need to involve ourselves in it and have people die pointlessly, like the time with the Shadowless girls.” (Haruka) “...I see.” (Kougetsu)

The assassination attempt with the Shadowless class assassins that ended in failure.

Moreover, not only did they not hunt Iroha, for some reason, they headed towards the company's representative, Raidou, and got disposed of instead.

To be exact, it was them doing what they wanted, and it wasn't the error of Kougetsu, but a failure is a failure.

It is also true that important pawns were pointlessly lost.

The biting words of Haruka had enough effect to stop the pressing of Kougetsu.

Kougetsu had a bitter expression surface and only gestured in response as he turned on his heels.

"Are you leaving?" (Haruka)

"Yeah, I will be coming back another time." (Kougetsu)

"Tread carefully, okay? I am, in outline, an unknown factor after all."
(Haruka) Haruka laughs sweetly.

Kougetsu doesn't respond to it and only his steps were heard as he left the place.

(I'm impressed at how thoroughly that strong spirited woman was broken. A hero that shows no hesitation in using a power that maddens people to this extent. Was it okay to utilize it? No, don't waver. Everything is for the sake of the Osakabe, for the sake of my own justice. At any rate, there's no room to return.) (Kougetsu) Remembering the original nature of Haruka who he knew well in the past and has now been changed by the power of Tomoki, Kougetsu felt his conviction waiver.

But he immediately throws away the doubts that were being born while thinking about his next move against the Kuzunoha Company.

He went his way back in a dark morning.

Chapter 268: An impossible reunion

White as always.

After the night passed, I had come to a place I wouldn't even imagine I would be a few hours ago.

The outside is pure white.

That place is, to my surprise...

"I am truly sorry, Waka-sama! I am aware that you are in the middle of clearing the labyrinth of Lorel, but..."

The one who is lowering his head is Shiki.

Actually, tomorrow is lecture day in the Academy.

At evening, I was planning on going to Rotsgard in order to have a preparatory meeting, so meeting with Shiki today was within schedule.

I simply didn't expect it to turn into meeting in the morning.

Because of the sudden call of Shiki, I am currently at Kaleneon, a place I haven't been to for a while.

"And so, how's Jin?" (Makoto)

"He has regained consciousness, but he is still in a state of extreme agitation. I didn't expect Jin to lose control in such a manner. It was my blunder." (Shiki)

"...He is still alive. You don't have to be bothered so much by it, Shiki. You must have estimated the amount he could handle when you had him train after all." (Makoto)

That's right.

Apparently, Shiki was training Jin, who was burning with desire to be employed by us, in a separate curriculum from that of the classes and had him take some work to see.

Of course, he wasn't alone. The company staff was also with him.

The training itself was just as I said, not something that was too

dangerous.

Regarding Jin, Amelia, and the students, I have given a relative amount of material for Shiki and have left it to him, and from what I have heard, there's no problems.

By nature, it was a situation where there's no need to call for me.

'I am truly sorry, Jin has been seriously wounded. Please come to Kaleneon posthaste', is the report I received in my sleep, and so, that's why I am currently in Kaleneon.

From what Shiki has said, the treatment has been safely done and has shown the best results where no scars are left.

However, because Jin was about to die –not in a class, but in actual combat– he fell into a state of agitation.

...Well, at the classes, no matter how much they are conscious of death, lately, they have seriously understood somewhere in their minds that they won't die.

Even if we corner them right at the borders of death, we wouldn't go as far as actually killing them after all.

But actual combat is different.

For the sake of stealing, protecting, eating; they will fight the enemy and kill it.

Of course, only one side will survive and the other will die.

In other words, Jin has experienced the fear of actual borderline death that he has not experienced in a while, and his state of mind is currently unstable.

In terms of strength, he has plenty enough to work as an adventurer, but –fufufu– looks like he has finally stepped into the starting line of becoming a warrior in the real sense of the word.

He probably remembered the time with the lesser dragon and that has made him even more mortified and agitated.

That was also actual combat, but he was in a party, moreover, they had countermeasures before fighting, and they also had tenacity that surpassed their fear.

Now then...why was Jin on the verge of dying this time?

“...Actually, I am expecting Jin to act in Kaleneon’s matters. And so, I was thinking about having him experience fighting in a snow country and the way to fight there, so I brought him here with the intentions of having him learn in actual practice.” (Shiki)

“And there was an unexpected factor that even Shiki was unable to predict. Is that how it is?” (Makoto)

“...Yes.” (Shiki)

Shiki’s bitter smile was heavy.

Maybe he thinks he has planted a trauma in his student.

Being honest here, I don’t feel like Shiki needs to feel so responsible about it.

I also have no intentions of blaming him at all for the injury of Jin.

After this, I plan on saying this to Jin when he gets somewhat better: ‘Don’t make Shiki worry’, ‘are you a weakling?’, ‘are your limbs decorations?’, which is just some light abuse.

I don’t know for what sake he did it, but he came to our place seeking strength, and said he desired to be employed in the Kuzunoha Company.

He should have known of its danger.

He himself has taken the lessons and has been watching us, so he should have known that there’s no way he would obtain power and money by sipping tea while watching the sunset.

If that wasn’t the case, he would have dropped out of class.

On top of that, he was suggested training by Shiki and he accepted it, and splendidly failed in it.

That’s right, he failed expectations.

At the very least, that how I have to think as the representative of the company.

Everyone from Asora is also going outside and doing their best as part of the company with pride, so the responsibility is heavier.

If it were simply about the class, it would be another story, but when it is about Jin and Amelia, I must make sure to act the part.

“Shiki, in this time’s matter, Jin betrayed your expectations and you were disappointed. That’s all there’s to it.” (Makoto)

“But I—! Am in part their teacher as well.” (Shiki)

“At the same time –for now, at least– you are the company superior of those two. Right?” (Makoto)

“That’s...yes, it is exactly as you say, but...” (Shiki)

“Then, let’s go with expecting the same as everyone at Asora in terms of work. Without the partiality that they are students. You are focusing too much on it.” (Makoto)

“Am I...really focusing too much on it? I admit that because he is under my tutelage and inexperienced, I have been soft.” (Shiki)

“That’s how I see it. No matter if he is a student under your tutelage, as long as he wants to work in the Kuzunoha Company, inexperience doesn’t matter. If we are going to hire them, it would be troublesome if they don’t properly show the strength we seek from them.” (Makoto)

“...Right. It is just as you say. If we are soft with only them, it wouldn’t be a good example for the people of Asora that have crossed the gate and working hard at the outside for the company. You are completely right.” (Shiki)

“I am leagues away from preaching Shiki though. Hahaha.” (Makoto)

“No, that’s not true. This is not good, I just end up treating them as students rather than acting as a superior. If they are going to be involved with the company, I have to properly do things.” (Shiki)

“That’s right, that’s the way to go. Now then, Jin should have calmed

down by now. Maybe I should go with the: 'hey, wimp'. And so, why did Jin end up that way?" (Makoto)

The mysterious factor that overturned the expectation of Shiki.

It interests me.

"That's probably me~!"

"Uwa?!"

From the other side of the room's door, a response suddenly came in place of a knock.

What?!

Who?!

No, this voice...

I have heard it before?!

"Is it okay to enter?!"

An energetic voice resonates in the room.

Obviously, I look at Shiki.

"There's probably no mistake. Because of that person's influence, Jin chased the mamonos too far and received an injury." (Shiki)

"Heh~."

I see.

It is a voice I have heard before, but...at the same time, there's a sense of discomfort for remembering.

It is as if something is out of place. A strange sensation.

Who is it?

Well, for now, it seems like the other side doesn't hold any hostility, so let's have it enter.

"Please, go ahead." (Makoto)

"Excuse my intrusion!!"

Energetic.

At any rate, it seems to be an energetic person.

I could tell before that person came in but, she is a girl.

She is in her teens and...

...

Around the same age as Jin and the others...

But...

Hah?!

Haaaaaah?!!!

“Nice to meet you! It is an honor to make your acquaintance, Raidou-sama! At the orders of my father, Falz, I am on duty at the Adventurer Guild of Kaleneon, my name’s Sofia!!”

Short blue hair, both eyes not showing a single irregularity, and her energy is the same as before entering the room.

The dragon slayer that Root supposedly dealt the finishing blow to...has, for some reason, rejuvenated, and is standing in front of me.

...Father?

Father, you say?!

“And that’s how it is. Because of me, it seems I made the apprentice-san there get injured. I am sorry.” (Sofia)

“ ... ”

The young Sofia explained the situation for me, and lowered her head deeply –at me.

With no stiffness and no uneasiness showing.

No, that’s not on that level. This is...yeah, she clearly doesn’t know me.

It looks like she really doesn’t know.

For some reason, she seems to be incredibly interested in me and that part is eerie, but there's not a single trace of her faking.

Sofia.

I don't know everything that happened in her past.

But...if –and only IF–she didn't have the objective of devouring Superior Dragons to be on the same level as Root, and didn't have any sort of factor that distorted her into darkness as she grew up, she might have ended up being a woman like this.

Of course, that's only an if.

But the young Sofia in front of me isn't some sort of residual spirit of her or an undead, she has clear presence. Moreover, she is calling that Root as father.

...No, it wasn't Root.

Falz.

That's how she called him.

“Raidou-sama?” (Sofia)

“Ah, right. I understand. It is nothing you should apologize for. It just means that our Jin is inexperienced.” (Makoto)

“Inexperienced?! It is true that he is a bit of a weird guy, but his skills were quite high. Ah! Could it be that in the Kuzunoha Company, even that is considered inexperienced?!” (Sofia)

The young Sofia talks to me with glittering eyes.

A bit of a weird guy. It is not like Jin is a weird guy.

But from what I hear of young Sofia, he is indeed weird.

I have also confirmed with Shiki, and it seems like what she says is true.

Sister Miranda, huh.

It seems like that's what Jin shouted when he coincidentally met Sofia in the middle of his training and ran to her.

It wasn't on the level of resembling an acquaintance, he was completely sure that this young Sofia was this person called Miranda.

Hm...

Doesn't sound like he went crazy from the cold.

In the first place, the current Sofia is clearly strange.

She is younger, doesn't remember me, and her impression of the Kuzunoha Company is overwhelmingly good.

And that girl looks similar to someone else?

No good, I don't understand.

"Can't say he is skilled when he ended up injured just because his strength was not fitting for the place. It is true that if I am asked whether Jin is weak or strong in the Kuzunoha Company, I would say that he is an apprentice. He is still weak." (Makoto)

"Uwaa~~! As expected of the world's strongest war potential, the Kuzunoha Company! You are exactly how father said!!" (Sofia)

...

As I thought, even here she mentions Root.

Geez.

This Sofia being here, or more like, everything about this is a scheme of his.

Going through the trouble of leaving this girl in Kaleneon, must mean that he was looking forward to me finding her and be taken aback by it.

And also, he expects me to go flying to his place asking for the circumstances of this.

...That's exactly what I will be doing though.

That irritates me.

In the first place, what's that about being the world's strongest war potential.

That's not an evaluation you give to a company.

"War potential, is it. Seriously, how ill-natured of Falz-dono." (Makoto)

"No! My father always says this frequently. That being able to cooperate with the Kuzunoha Company is a big benefit for the Adventurer Guild. He said that Raidou-sama is an important and irreplaceable existence."

(Sofia)

"..."

"T-That's why he said that you are his 'most trusted person' and send me to Kaleneon. I was looking forward to the day I meet you like this. That's the truth." (Sofia)

...Sofia.

She looks happy.

Yeah, there's no doubt about that.

There's no doubt in her words.

Let's start over. I will give her the chance.

It is certainly great.

But...that innocence, that pure way of her bringing the conversation to me, looking at her who is happy about this moving meeting of hers...for some reason, it was painful for me.

I still don't understand the reason why.

The figure of Sofia enjoying life...looked pitiful.

I don't know how, but Root has given her a life opposite of hatred, a life of happiness.

That's how it is, and yet...

I can't read the emotions of Shiki who is standing at my side.

He is simply showing a gentle expression as a superior of the company and at times, gesturing comprehension to the words of Sofia.

"Ah, he told me to keep this a secret, but I can't lie to father and Raidou-

sama, so I am telling you this, okay?” (Sofia)

“Hm?”

The young Sofia made a troubled expression and then soon returned to the smile she showed until now as she said this.

Shiki’s eyebrow moves slightly.

...New information huh.

That ‘he’ she mentioned just now, is she referring to the person that rescued Jin at the base of the snow mountain?

That’s what Sofia said.

That there was a man who wiped out the mamonos that cornered Jin.

It is questionable for a person that’s challenging the snow mountain, but apparently, it was a knight-looking person that sported a full plate armor. Moreover, he was riding a strong horse.

There’s so many things to retort to that I don’t even know where to begin.

Being told this is some new sort of illusion magic would be more believable.

“He introduced himself as Aznoval. It seems like he saved the apprentice there, and when I arrived at the place, he said: ‘I am Aznoval...is the alias I go by as a knight –no I mean, an adventurer of ori– no, not that either, I am just passing by. By the way, where’s Tsige?’” (Sofia)

Aznoval?

I know that name though.

“From the looks of it, I don’t think it was an alias but his real name. He was wandering Kaleneon, and was asking the directions for Tsige. That’s clearly weird.” (Sofia)

...That’s true. It is way too far.

It is like being in China, and asking the way to Finland.

If it's from Silk Road to Middle East, that's barely realistic.

Even if this world has teleport formations, the standard way of transportation in this world is at the level of the Middle Ages.

Anyways, Tsige huh.

If he is from the Adventurers of Origin, I can't ignore that the name Tsige came out from his mouth.

First of all, let's look at the state of Jin, and then, return to Tsige.

...I will leave the labyrinth exploration for the afternoon, and in that time, I will have everyone investigate about the things related to Iroha-chan.

Now that I think about it, Mio wanted to inspect the miso production.

It is dull but, as a small reward, let's make it free time this morning with the pretext of investigation.

"At any rate, what should we do about that boy? I am not Miranda-san, and am not that boy's sister though. Today is our first time meeting. If this were a new type of flirting, I would have been able to reject it..." (Sofia)

"I will be asking him that after this, so it may take a bit of time, but if you are okay with it..." (Makoto)

"If Raidou-sama says so. Also, please don't use formal speech with someone like me. It seems like you are busy today, but it would make me happy if you were to lend me your time in the near future! Well then, I would feel bad taking so much of your time, so I will be leaving now!" (Sofia)

She doesn't intend to meet Jin, huh.

But that's true.

It would make me feel more at ease if this were simply Jin fallin' in love at first sight with Sofia and him trying some nonsensical flirting.

Now then, let's hurry.

I have to finish the business here and in Tsige while it is morning, and

return to Kannaoui by the afternoon.

Tsige huh. It would be nice if there's someone who knows about the objective of this Aznoval person though.

Chapter 269: Mummy Jin and Sweetheart Raidou

“Ooh, a splendid mummy look you have there. How are you feeling, mummy Jin?”

I heard that his external wound treatment had been finished, but when we entered the room where he is resting, I saw Jin with his whole body wrapped in bandages.

Now then, because it was such a comical look, I unintentionally called him a mummy man before a wimp.

But if he is already recovered, there's no need for bandages.

“...Sensei... Shiki-san.” (Jin)

Then why is Jin currently being packaged to such an extent with bandages.

For keep him in check.

I decide to ignore the voice of the mummy that was groaning.

Oooh.

The bandages continue on at the ends of the bed, and even those are tightly wrapped. Also at the legs of the thick and strong-looking wooden legs.

In other words, someone physically restrained him with bandages so that he wouldn't rampage in his agitation.

Fumu, splendid medical treatment.

From what I have seen of the patient, he looks somewhat calm.

But with this, I feel like the report of him being silent was because the restraining had finished.

“Okay, I see now. And so, the wimp-kun that got confused, went out of control, and was almost at the verge of death—I mean, Jin-kun, let's hear your report.” (Makoto) Now then, let's act as a teacher and a superior.

Objective view.

“Uh, a report?” (Jin)

“That’s right, a report. You came here as training for the Kuzunoha Company after all. Isn’t that right, Shiki?” (Makoto) “...Yeah. I would also like to hear the explanation of why it turned out this way from the person himself.” (Shiki) While placing slight thorns in it, I urge him to give me a report with a smile.

On the other hand, Shiki looks down at him with quite the anger.

“That’s...uhm, how should I begin explaining...” (Jin)

It is unusual to see Jin in disarray.

It is a face I haven’t seen lately at the Academy.

“First of all, why did you chase the mamonos too far? From what I understood of your job this time, it was at most...like carrying luggage.” (Makoto) “On top of that, I gave you a strict order, didn’t I, Jin? That you shouldn’t move on your own accord. That the strength of the mamonos deep in the snowy region are too much for the current you.” (Shiki) “... That’s true, I was indeed told that. This time’s injury was not the fault of Shiki-san.” (Jin) With his head hung down, Jin admits his own fault.

He muttered weakly that it wasn’t the fault of Shiki.

...Is he an idiot?

From the very beginning I didn’t think Shiki was at fault.

Also, injury?

It looks like he is misunderstanding what I am asking here.

“There’s no need to tell me something so obvious. Everything is your just desserts.” (Makoto) “Uh.”

“Shiki, what was the state of Jin when he encountered Sofia?” (Makoto) When I spoke the name of Sofia, the body of Jin stiffened.

The main cause of his disarray huh.

But I think we first need to make him notice the misunderstanding he

has.

It is fine to just ask about this thing of Miranda and Sofia later.

“He was already out cold and his whole body was covered in blood. It seems the surrounding snow was also dyed in red. From what we investigated when the treatment was underway, there was half a fistful of insects swarming in his body...and that he lost his consciousness most likely because of his external wounds made by the bitten off meat and his lost of blood. I also think there’s no mistake in it.” (Shiki) “Any other thing?” (Makoto)

“At the same time, he was injected poison. It takes away the freedom of their prey, and serves to prolong the time its prey is alive...no, it is a resourceful poison that weakens the resistance and prolongs the freshness of the meat. But this time, that served as a saving. Thanks to that, Jin’s treatment made it in time after all.” (Shiki) “On top of that, it was also thanks to that mysterious knight who swept away the insects.” (Makoto) “Yes.” (Shiki)

“Jin, just now, you said ‘this time’s wound’, didn’t you? Are you seriously saying that?” (Makoto) Hearing the report of Shiki again, I could tell that Jin’s life was saved by a heavy luck that would make anyone envious.

This time’s injury?

Don’t joke around.

In normal circumstances, it would have been almost certain that he would have died.

“Eh?”

“The type of poison the insects used, the knight’s help; if even one of those were missing, you would be dead by now.” (Makoto) “?!!”

The word dead made the eyes of Jin open wide.

This is why I can’t handle lucky people.

Makes me want to shout: ‘give me a bit of it!’.

“Yeah, no doubt about it. The words ‘injured’ and ‘seriously wounded’

are just too lukewarm. You were saved purely by luck. If this were based on ability, you would have long been the preserved food of those insects. What was its name again...Snow Dung Beetle, maybe?" (Makoto) "Yes, around these parts, as long as you don't chase them too far, they are not that dangerous creatures. However, if you chase them too far, the danger level increases in an instant though." (Shiki) Because they lure you in and are devour you with numbers in an instant.

It is a creature that's exactly as Shiki explained.

It is an opponent that you can ignore its danger with certainty as long as you are careful.

Seriously, how pathetic.

"Your actions this time around, frankly speaking, there's a lot to retort to, and regarding the training, we will obviously have you stay put for a while. Have this clear in your mind, Jin, in terms of ability, you have already died once." (Makoto) "!! That's not it! It is true that I let my guard down a bit! I also admit that I wasn't calm for a bit! But-!!" (Jin) "...And forget that all those 'bits' are what link you to death? Can't even make conversation with you. Like this, your life that was barely saved will only end up being layed down again in the near future. Shiki, whatever the case, have Jin return to the Academy. Having him here will only be an annoyance." (Makoto) "Yes, looks like there's the need for quite the lecture." (Shiki) Shiki nods at my words.

At any rate, leaving Jin here on the pretext of training would only be a bother for the people of Kaleneon.

Also, leaving him with the reason of this -Sofia- doesn't seem like it will be a plus for Jin at all.

"Please wait!! I want to do my best here for a bit more, just a bit more!!" (Jin) "Rejected. As a teacher and as a superior, this decision won't change. Hah...hey, Jin, the reason for that zeal of yours, is it as expected...the Dragon Slayer Sofia?" (Makoto) How I should describe that younger Sofia.

For now, I decide to go with Dragon Slayer.

That's right, I have to properly hear about this from that pervert.

Even though I have to go to Tsige regarding the matter with Aznoval-san...

"That person's name...is not Sofia. She is my first sword mentor, close friend, and the first person I respected..." (Jin) Hey hey.

A mentor, a close friend, and a person you respected, you say... They had quite the deep relationship?

But from what I see in the atmosphere of that Sofia, even if I were to imagine her past and present, I feel like it was all a one-way from Jin...

Please spare me from her being a past girlfriend.

Even if I met her after, it would make me feel bad.

"I wasn't able to confess, but I think she was also my first love." (Jin) Are you an esper?

But she wasn't his girlfriend.

Hm?

No, if I had to choose between both, it is probably worse than being a past girlfriend?

"And so...she is probably the woman I hurt the most in my life. Sister Miranda. In the past, she looked a bit more mature, but there's no way I would mistake that person. She is the person who I intended to search for life, apologize, and atone for!!" (Jin) I killed her once.

S-Sorry about that, Jin.

Looks like she is somewhat alive now, so is it fine to say it doesn't count?

Ah...I now have one more secret I will definitely carry to my grave.

Since he has stated it with such certainty, I don't think he has the wrong person...so just in case, let's investigate the past of Sofia.

It would be nice if Root tells us about it honestly, but for now, let's investigate over here as well.

Hah...

“...But the person herself is without doubt saying her name is Sofia. By the way, you who’s spreading trouble for the people around, haven’t given her a good impression. Not only did you ignore her direct warning about controlling yourself, you also acted in that way.” (Makoto) “Hah?!” (Jin)

“Coming back another time would be the correct decision. We are not fiends, Jin. We will make it so that you understand her tendencies.” (Shiki)
Shiki is doing a follow-up.

Well, it is Sofia.

Even without Jin’s matter, I would have wanted information.

If it’s only that, there’s no problem.

“But I heard that this place is lacking personnel!” (Jin)

So he still intends to cling on huh.

Definitely no.

“About that, we will have Amelia and the other employees come here in shifts. At the very least, it will be better than you who only increased the workload.” (Makoto) “Kugh... I...” (Jin)

“That’s how it is. Rest here for today. No need to work either. I will have Shiki come pick you up tomorrow. Jin, reflect upon the worth of the life you have been blessed with today.” (Makoto) “...”

Oh, he grew obedient.

“Sensei...” (Jin)

Or not.

“What is it?” (Makoto)

“I am truly sorry...for troubling you with my own matters.” (Jin) “Yeah, reflect plenty. Worrying is tiring. It would make me incredibly happy if you don’t do that often.” (Makoto) “Totally agree.” (Shiki)

“Okay...” (Jin)

I get an agree from Shiki along with a big nod.

Jin also grew obedient this time for sure and returns a response while still tied to the bed.

I leave him as mummy Jin and depart from the room.

Okay, one task done!

Next is Tsige, to confirm if there's information regarding Aznoval from Rembrandt-san or someone else.

Maybe I should also ask the adventurers to see if they have an idea. It seems he is like the pioneer of adventurers after all.

"Waka-sama, thank you for going through the trouble tod-" (Shiki) "It's fine. It is a boy that has high chances of working officially in our company, and also..." (Makoto) "..."

"The matter of Sofia surfaced anyways. I will confirm with that pervert about what in the world is going on, and if possible, I want to wrap up the matter without having Jin hate me. Shiki, it might be troublesome, but I am counting on you for a while." (Makoto) "Yes, please leave it to me." (Shiki)

"Well then, I will be heading to Tsige. After that, I will have to hurry and return to Rotsgard and Lorel. Is this kind of busy something to be happy about as a merchant?" (Makoto) "Yeah, it must be." (Shiki)

Waving at Shiki who is smiling gently and nodding, I cross through the mist gate that has the destination set to Tsige.

The location changes.

In an instant, hot and dry air circulates through my lungs.

It is the air of Tsige.

Until just a few moments ago, I was at a deep snowy northern region breathing out white air, so I got bewildered for a second.

Leaving the office room of the company, I greet everyone that's working

and depart.

As always, it is a town which sight changes every time I come, but this is not the time to enjoy it.

I hurriedly head to the Adventurer Guild.

On the way, the adventurers, merchants, and the residents turned to look at me again, but I didn't respond to them.

How to say it...I have become quite the celebrity in this town.

It is fine when there's nothing to do, but in times when I am in a hurry, I can't just stop to chat each time.

"Hm? Isn't that Raidou-kun? If I remember correctly, I heard you had gone to Lorel though?"

"Long time no see, Rembrandt-san. Because of business, I have returned for a bit. It looks like the town is operating as usual, but is the war the same?" (Makoto) I promptly meet with Rembrandt-san and jump to the topic.

Looks like he is...a bit tired.

His exhaustion is showing more than normal. But contrary to that, his eyes are shining, and he seems to have higher motivation than before though.

Could it be the war has gotten worse, or it is about to get worse?

If that's the case, I will have to tranquilize that one first.

It seems this is more of priorities first after all.

Seriously, things come one after the other.

"Umu. The war situation, or more like, the negotiations are going kind of...well. To the point that it is a bit eerie. There were stealth corps trying to infiltrate the town a number of times, but we have been able to intercept them without letting them get close." (Rembrandt) Oh, that's unexpected.

Looks like it is actually going well.

“We have also made a secret agreement with the surrounding towns about maintaining the status quo when the matter of the independence was announced. If Raidou-kun brings corps that will serve as protection, Tsige can shift into the stage that’s as good as succeeded.” (Rembrandt) “As expected of Rembrandt-san.” (Makoto)

“The people that caused a coup d’etat are beginning to calm down, so the ones that we have to be cautious about would be the royal family. Before that ‘something’, that was able to overturn the situation when the capital was about to fall, is turned towards us, as long as you return, we will be firm as a rock.” (Rembrandt) Rembrandt-san nods at my words of ‘as expected’ as if saying ‘leave it to me’ and continues speaking.

As I thought, he did have a lot of influence in the political area as well.

In order to survive the world of commerce, you will end up gaining those kind of things on the way.

Especially when you have surpassed a certain scale.

“Understood. We will also hurry as much as possible. We will try to succeed in a few days from now.” (Makoto) “...You are the one that is truly dependable. And so, what’s this business? If it’s something I can be of help, I will lend you a hand.” (Rembrandt) “I want information regarding a certain someone. It is a person by the name Aznoval. Do you know if he has some sort of connection with this town?” (Makoto) “Aznoval... I do think I have heard of him before though. If I remember correctly, he is a legendary knight that appears in the fairy tales of Lorel.” (Rembrandt) “Y-Yeah. So you knew.” (Makoto)

“The name at least. However, I can’t find any connection with Tsige and the name Aznoval. In the first place, I don’t remember hearing his name in anywhere but Lorel.” (Rembrandt) “Is that so...” (Makoto)

I thought that maybe it wasn’t strange for him to come to the World’s Border, but at the very least, it seems like there’s no stories or records remaining that point to that.

“But well, it is a request from none other than you. I will try to investigate about it. If I learn of something, I will contact the Kuzunoha

Company.” (Rembrandt) “Thanks. By the way, Rembrandt-san...”
(Makoto)

“Hm?”

“The situation seems to have turned pretty well, and yet, it looks like you are quite exhausted. Did something happen?” (Makoto) “Ah, so it showed in my face huh. Sorry to worry you. This is a different matter. There’s a few things I was thinking regarding the layout of the town, you see. I am stuck in a variety of things. In the near future, I will most likely need you to get involved as well.” (Rembrandt) As if enjoying it from the bottom of his heart and as if he was a child finding a secret base, he gave a broad smile.

Looks like this really is a different matter from the independence.

He looks like he is having crazy fun.

This person is incredible as always.

In this situation of grave importance where they are trying to gain the independence of a town from a country, he is already aiming for something new, even though he is a central part of it.

And he is gleeful about it.

His vitality is on the genius level.

It makes me sad that only one thing is already too much for me.

But even if I have those negative thoughts, it won’t increase my ability.

I have to treasure the fact that I am able to see the work of this person and his way of thinking from up close.

If I am able to take in even a bit of it, it would be most satisfactory.

“Please do so. If I am able to work with Rembrandt-san, I will definitely participate. Well then, I am slightly busy, so I will be excusing myself now.” (Makoto) “Alright. I as well have earned a lot of ideas thanks to you. Come whenever you please.” (Rembrandt) I am truly grateful.

I lower my head deeply and bid my farewells to Rembrandt-san.

At any rate, he has completely turned the Adventurer Guild into his work office.

I leave to the area where normal adventurers can't enter and head to the hall, and in an instant, the amount of people increase.

The hall that's enveloped in heat, is covered with hustle and bustle, and there's a great amount of adventurers.

Must mean there are groups that are getting ready to go exploring or hunting.

Or more like, the current Tsige might be like this in all times of the day.

It looks like the wasteland related requests are being taken pretty actively as well.

Looks like the seed spread by Tomoe and Mio has properly sprouted.

...Nice.

But in this congestion, it will be pretty hard to ask about Aznoval-san.

Seems like I will have to leave that for later and prioritize asking that pervert about the matter of Sofia.

"Heh~. Then Vegan-san went through the trouble of coming all the way here from Rotsgard for the sake of your sweetheart? That's incredibly passionate!"

"In long distance relationships, the emotions burn stronger for both sides than when they are close to each other. There's no assurance that person is still here, but the rumors of Tsige have been amazing lately. Even if my sweetheart is not here, this can still serve as a conversation topic. After that, it was all about going with the momentum." (Vegan) ...

I am hearing a familiar voice?

Moving my head as if a 'gigigi' sound was coming out of it, I direct my gaze at the source.

"This town itself is practically a sightseeing location, so I think Vegan-san won't regret it."

“I was suddenly able to meet a member of the number one party of the town, Toa-san, so just the fact that I was able to become an acquaintance of yours is already enough for a conversation topic. Honestly speaking, I didn’t think you would be such a beautiful lady.” (Vegan) “Don’t joke around now. And, about that sweetheart of yours, did you get to know her at Rotsgard?” (Toa) I also thought this at the time with Sofia but, why the hell are you here?

Acting as if you are a harmless handsome man.

“Actually, it was late at night you see, at his room.” (Vegan) “Eh? ‘His’?” (Toa)

Toa makes a puzzled expression.

Well, of course she would.

The person that she guided here is a...man after all.

“That’s right. At Raidou-kun’s—” (Vegan)

The moment I heard that name coming out from his mouth... the disgust and many other things that were born of Root’s dark sides I have heard from a variety of places, and the sides he hasn’t shown me, I could feel it flooding out from my body.

“Who...” (Makoto)

“Eh?”

“To think we would actually meet—eh?”

Without making a sound, I closed the distance to the two and spoke.

Root instantly noticed me and was surprised, and was then surprised that my movements were not stopping.

“Is your damn sweetheart, idiooooot!!!!” (Makoto)

Swinging widely, but properly sealing Root’s defense and evasion routes with the Magic Armor...

“Geh, you are kidding, right? R-Raidou-bugh!”

I smash a terrifying telegraphed punch.

Ah, I forgot to cancel the Magic Armor.

Not only was he send flying, my fist had caved in the face of the silver haired handsome boy as he stood up.

I have created quite the picturesque face.

“R-Raidou-san. Uhm, so you have returned.” (Toa)

“I will be saying this for future’s sake as well, I am not in a relationship with him, and I am a straight man that loves women!” (Makoto) In the first place, your name is not Vegan.

Just how many false names do you have?!

Even though it saved me the trouble of going to Rotsgard, for some reason, this doesn’t make me happy at all!

Chapter 270: A long time ago

Root had that usual friendly smile and was showing good will without hiding it.

However, for some mysterious reason, now that I have obtained a variety of information I didn't know until now regarding him, I could feel some sort of fuzziness inside my chest.

Being involved with the Adventurers of Origin, learning of the Adventurer Guild, and about Sofia this morning; everything of these had some sort of 'I can't accept it' kind of feeling.

I don't know about the other members yet, but it seems like Rokuya-san accepts the past even now.

Sofia also...looked happy.

And yet, an unrelated party like me was feeling something that I didn't like.

Rokuya-san and the others are Wise, in other words, Japanese people, so a part of me does feel like it not just someone else's business.

Regarding Sofia, considering her relationship with Root, I am an outsider, but I am pretty related to that attachment she had and the end of her life as well.

"Anyways, come to my room. I have something to talk to you about."
(Makoto) "...Hey, Raidou-kun..." (Root)

"What?" (Makoto)

For now, I don't intend to follow your will, you know.

"Thinking about the experience of us both, I think bondage play is a bit too fast. Actually, I should be the one leading at first. To tell you the truth, I coincidentally have a blindfold...are you interested?" (Root) Root who is restrained in midair for now, was cheerfully saying rotten things while blushing.

Right, he is this kind of guy.

Yeah, I am beginning to remember now.

“Not at all! And by the way, this isn’t something to say in the Adventurer Guild!” (Makoto) “Eh?! This place is practically my house, so it is fine, it is fine.” (Root) He is the Guild Master after all...

Whatever.

Let’s bring him to the company quickly.

Ah right, before that, let’s ask Toa-san about Aznoval-san while I am here, and if possible, ask her to investigate about it.

“Uhm, it seems like you are in the middle of something, so I will be excusing myself now, okay?” (Toa) “Please wait. Actually, there’s one thing that I want to ask you.” (Makoto) “Raidou-san, to me? Of course, go ahead and ask anything.” (Toa) Toa made a surprised face as she accepted to answer my question.

Well, she currently has no need to hide anything from me after all; including the matter of her ancestors’ dagger.

It helps me out.

Right now there’s other people here that can listen, but...well, even if the name Aznoval is spread from my mouth, it feels like it would have a lot of merits.

No need to care.

I will ask Root later, and in the first place, he is acquainted with them, and not only that, he also knows about their immortality.

“It is about a knight going by the name Aznoval. Do you have some sort of connection with him, or maybe you know someone that is connected with him?” (Makoto) “!!”

“?!”

Hm?

Both Toa and Root did quite the reaction.

It felt as if they had heard an unexpected name.

But this...it looks like not only Root, even Toa also knows about the name Aznoval.

Rembrandt-san also knew about it, and it might be possible it is only that.

No, this way of getting surprised is strange.

It is different from the time with Rembrandt-san.

“Raidou-kun, you...brought out quite the name again. Well, in Lorel, it is indeed a name that you would hear though.” (Root) Root was making a hard to describe face as he brings out his voice as if squeezing it out.

He is the very person that made them immortal.

It probably revived some bitter memories and nostalgic memories as well.

“Aznoval... The standard-bearer of the Adventurers of Origin. Knight Aznoval?” (Toa) “Looks like you know him.” (Makoto)

“My origins are from there. There’s no person in Lorel who hates the priestess or Apple. Same goes for me.” (Toa) “...Ooh.”

It seems like Root took interest in the nostalgic words of Toa, he voiced it out.

“Before the Union came into existence, they were supporting the people without being double-faced about it. Legendary existences that left their mark in history. Is that what you know?” (Makoto) “That as well. But for me, Aznoval is actually a bit special. Within the Adventurers of Origin, he is a heroic person that’s described as the representation of muscle and recklessness. And his stories are mostly within those types.” (Toa) He is the standard bearer, right?

In a leader way.

I am also a top that can’t say much of others, but is that really okay?

Root is smiling in glee.

Does that mean that really is the description of this Aznoval person?

“But he was by no means a stupid man. In a long past, when Lorel had the objective of raising their national prestige by slaying a certain Superior Dragon that slept in the wasteland, the knight Aznoval suddenly appeared at the center of the country and warned them to stop that.” (Toa) Toa-san speaks as if reminiscing a long past.

Well, it is actually a long past though.

However, for her, that challenge to this Superior Dragon and the stopping of it has warped her life heavily.

That certain Superior Dragon, Shen.

Called invincible, and indulging in sleep... well, it is Tomoe.

She didn't even remember it until she was asked about it, but it seems the result was a big failure.

Quite the amount of elites had fallen at the wasteland.

Toa's ancestors as well.

Their heirloom that was an important dagger was lost there, their family chased down to every place and had to move around repeatedly, and because of that, Toa became an adventurer and came to the wasteland to search for the dagger of her ancestors. And as she was about to die, her sister, Rinon, got acquainted with me, and after some twists and turns, Toa and her on the verge to death party members are currently the top team in Tsige.

Well, you really don't know what life might bring you.

Right now, that dagger has safely returned to her hands, and she has decided to make Tsige her home, continuing to contribute to the town as an adventurer and further polishing her skills.

In its own way, this is a good ending.

“In the end, the grand labyrinth of Yaso-Katsui had erupted at that time, so he had to head there to reduce the damage it would cause, and in that space of time, the foolish expedition was carried out, and...in the end, well, that's how I am here now in a sense. Because there's that part as well,

within the Adventurers of Origin, Aznoval is the one I like the most.”
(Toa) I see, I see.

So there was that kind of connection huh.

But looking that far in the past and the far future that is now, I don't think it would be a reason why Aznoval would come to Tsige.

Well, at least it is deeper than her simply knowing, but I feel like it is a bit weak.

Wait, she said something incredible in such a nonchalant manner.

What did she say about the labyrinth?

Erupted?

Isn't that supposed to be what volcanoes do?

“Please wait there. That labyrinth can erupt?” (Makoto) I tried asking about it.

There's no way that's the case.

In the lines of common sense, that is. But that place doesn't apply common sense...

“I haven't lived that long in Lorel, so I don't have much knowledge about it. But it seems like it is a place where those kind of things happen as well. At that time, he ate two Board Fruits, which are his source of power, pushed through the lava, and opened a deep hole to calm it down.” (Toa) I do remember hearing that Toa and Rinon were born in a place close to the Empire.

Since they were born, they haven't gone to Lorel Union once.

So even if I ask her more about it, she wouldn't know.

It would be dangerous if it erupts while we are inside.

Let's try asking everyone regarding that when I return.

If there's any signs of it, we would have to hurry.

Even so, doing things like stopping eruptions, just like Serwhale-san.

Looks like he is quite the person.

The last part about some sort of fruit was probably added in the story, so leaving aside the details, there's no doubt he did some sort of big exploit to stop the damage.

For some reason, it reminded me of the classic hero that ate spinach from a can to get buffed up.

"I see..." (Makoto)

"...It feels as if Raidou-san gets involved in the mysteries of the world one after the other. I feel like you are having more of an adventure than adventurers." (Toa) "It is certainly true that that's how it ends up as a result. It is not to my liking, but I can't deny it." (Makoto) "...In those days, there was a Superior Dragon called Waterfall in Limia Kingdom that provided the lake's blessings; in Gritonia Empire, there's one named Grount that lived at the desert and provided trials, and anyone that passed those received a blessing; on the other hand, Lorel and Aion were one head lower than the other two within the major powers, but they were in a delicate line that was still enough to consider them major powers, and... because they were in such a delicate line, they were desperate to obtain the power of a Superior Dragon. Really...what a stupid story." (Toa) Toa knows about this pretty well.

Is it because it was passed down in the past of his family, or maybe she herself took interest in it and investigated?

Since we are talking about Toa, who personally came to the wasteland in order to recover the dagger, it might be possible.

Anyways, so the reason of that expedition in the past was because they were planning on beating up Shen and bringing her back to the country?

If that's true, then it really is a foolish story.

If I was there at that time, I might have told them to stop it as well.

Even in Limia, it was only because the lake was within the boundaries of their country; in Gritonia as well, it is not like the White Desert was prepared by the Empire to call Grount there, it was simply Grount being

there since the beginning.

Lorel also had Futsu since the beginning, and the labyrinth also should have had Doma as well.

And yet, why did they go through the trouble of going to the wasteland for Shen?

Wait, it seems like the labyrinth already existed by that time.

And yet, Lorel didn't know that there was a Superior Dragon within their own country?

Is that even possible?

!

Or it could be that, at that time, Doma was not a Superior Dragon...

No wait, that's questionable too.

"Whistle~" (Root)

Root blatantly evades my gaze of suspicion.

He is trying to avoid it.

No, I won't let you escape.

You are also involved in this?

In the future, whenever it is related to Superior Dragons, I will just place this guy as the number one suspect.

"Is that so. It is not such a pleasant story for you, and yet, I made you speak of it. I am really sorry. Even so, if there's any other thing you remember of him, can you please contact the company? I want to know about the knight Aznoval and the Adventurers of Origin as much as possible since it is connected to the matter I am involved in." (Makoto) "It is already all in the past anyways. I don't mind. When I return to my house, I will investigate about it again!" (Toa) Past huh.

I am probably the weird one here.

It is true that this is a past that has already concluded.

There's nothing I can do this late in the game.

At the very least, Toa, who has already accomplished her own objective, is probably living her life now.

That's not wrong. It even feels dazzling.

"Thank you very much." (Makoto)

"Well then, with this, I will be excusing myself. Vegan-san as well, see you later." (Toa) "Yeah, thanks for guiding me. Also, sorry. That name is actually fake." (Root) "Eh?"

"It was for the sake of safety. There was not a shred of intent to deceive you. I am glad I met you, Toa. The staff of the Adventurer Guild in Tsige and the top adventurers in Tsige are splendid. If every place had this amount of liveliness and tension, I wouldn't have any complains. As the Guild Master, Falz, I consider this my pride." (Root) "Fal—eeeeh?!" (Toa)

"Ahaha. If you want to, I can make the preparations to hire you under the direct staff of the Adventurer Guild. If you are in the mood to, tell the people in charge anytime you want, okay? Well then, Raidou-kun, let's go to the Kusunoha Company." (Root) What's that about Falz. That's also a fake name.

Root really does lie as easy as breathing.

Is he actually the same type as Rona?

However, even if you try to look proper when you are being restrained in midair, your dignity right now is zero.

He said 'Let's go', but he himself can't even move.

On top of that, Root, your nose is running.

Ah, that's not it.

You have a nosebleed.

"...Hah..." (Makoto)

"Wait, Raidou-kun, what's that sigh for? Eh, why does my head feel funny? Ah, it kind of stung. Is this nosebleed? It is nosebleed, isn't it?"

Raidou-kun, my nose is bleeding!!” (Root) Well, your face was punched in after all.

Of course you would get some sort of injury from that, even if it is you.

“Now, everyone, sorry for the trouble here.” (Makoto) I bow my head once.

I could tell there was an uncontrollable atmosphere in the air.

I won’t take responsibility for this.

Cause I have to talk with this Root now after all.

I will probably not be refreshed with this.

But it would be nice, if even a little bit of this fuzziness inside of me is cleared.

Chapter 271: The difference in the sense of value in life

“Now then, there’s a mountain of things I want to hear of you, but first of all, why are you here?” (Makoto)

“Of course, to meet you.” (Root)

The top floor of the Kuzunoha Company’s new head office.

After releasing Root from the restrain at my office, he said this with a straight face.

Ah, of course, I entered through the backdoor.

As expected, it would be bad to have the customers that are in the middle of shopping learn of my return, of course, I can simply explain them that’s not the case, but I decided not to expose it.

“Okay, that might be one of the reasons. Then, the other reason?”
(Makoto)

“To inspect the Adventurer Guild of Tsige. Lately, the places around here have been rowdy, so it was to make a confirmation of sorts. And in truth, it seems like the Guild is pretty cooperative to the movements of the town.”
(Root)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

That part is exactly as he says.

We are having the Adventurer Guild cooperate entirely.

Thinking about the public position that Root talks about, and the Adventurer Guild’s significance, just having it as a meeting place is already helping plenty.

With the matter of the independence and the coup d’etat in Aion, there’s plenty reason for him to come here to inspect.

Then, he simply came flying here after hearing about me from Sofia, but it is not like he has any sort of ulterior motive?

Eeh? That Root?

But what he is saying makes sense...

It also sounds convincing.

“Makoto-kun?” (Root)

“Are those really the only reasons? Aren’t you scheming something?”
(Makoto)

“None none. I heard from the report of that girl that she had met you, heard a nostalgic name, and that you would be going to Tsige. Meeting with Makoto-kun was a matter of luck, but I thought that it would be nice to come to Tsige at least once, that’s all.” (Root)

Laughing lightly, he flaps his hand in front of his face and laughs.

“...Then that topic is fine already. Next, Sofia who I met not that long ago, what was that about? What are your intentions?” (Makoto)

“Uh, yeah. It is true that I was thinking about making it a small surprise for Makoto-kun, so I kept it a secret. Uhm...how to say it...Makoto-kun, aren’t you especially angry? Now that I think about it, I feel like it was the same a few moments ago too...” (Root)

“I heard and learned about a variety of things you were involved with, and I saw for myself the matter of Sofia after all. Just means that there’s no short amount of questionable things. Root, after what happened, didn’t you finish off Sofia? Why is she still alive, moreover, younger?” (Makoto)

“Things I was involved in, huh. I don’t think I have done that many things that would warrant hate from Makoto-kun though. Also, about that girl, I am simply having her take responsibility for what she did, you know?” (Root)

“Responsibility?” (Makoto)

Root was supposed to have retrieved the power of the Superior Dragons from Sofia and finished her.

I thought that was the last of the adventurer called Dragon Slayer, and yet, he tampered with her memories and made her younger.

When I asked for the reason, what I got in return from Root was the word 'responsibility'.

"Sofia and Lancer went and did whatever they wanted for the sake of their own goals. Of course, there was no small amount of sacrifices because of it. Because of their intervention, there have been several countries falling to ruin. The amount of people and material damage is still unknown. The chaos they created utilizing the war was also quite the deal. When Lancer grows to a certain extent, I will have him return to his original place, and will have him work as one of the dragons that provides trials, just like Grount. With none of what he has done till now, that is. Then, about Sofia..." (Root)

"About Sofia, you say. She wouldn't have done something like atoning. She wouldn't regret walking the path she chose. That's how it felt, you know?" (Makoto)

"Yeah, even at the border of death, she still spouted begrudging words towards me." (Root)

With both of his palms up, he shrugs his shoulders.

That does sound like the last moments of someone like Sofia.

I somewhat could tell that she wouldn't be doing something like plead for her life.

"Then, even with that, she didn't die?" (Makoto)

"Ahahaha! Oh you, Makoto-kun, that's not like you." (Root)

"What is?" (Makoto)

"Die and that's the end. 'Counting death as taking responsibility, don't joke around', isn't that something you said as well? Even if a crime has been committed, there's a limit to how many things one can take responsibility for when the one responsible is dead. Apparently, that's not something that can be forgiven. And so, that's the gist of it." (Root)

"..."

True.

I don't know when it was, but I do remember having a conversation like that in Rotsgard, with Tomoe and Root.

I think it revolved around seppuku.

Stirring society plenty, and when they realize that their objective can't be accomplished, they refuse to live in disgrace and choose suicide.

'All the responsibility is on me, so I want to bring a closure to my own life', just how selfish that is, is what I said. Well, I slightly remember I said that to the two while I was drunk.

"I am also of the same opinion as you. It is wrong to think that with death your responsibilities will stop their hounding. Luckily, she was an adventurer with power. She was also a vessel that had a bit of my power within her after all. That's why I decided to breathe life into her for recycling." (Root)

"Recycling..." (Makoto)

"By having her work as an adventurer in the direct control of the Adventurer Guild, I will have her work in reducing the amount of problems in the world. In other words, I am having her take responsibility." (Root)

"...And why did you tamper with her memories?" (Makoto)

Root didn't seem to show any hesitation as he explains the reason why he revived Sofia, and about her currently working.

"That's a foolish question, Makoto-kun. With how she is, there's no way she would have obediently followed my orders. Just as you saw, she was possessed by hate after all." (Root)

"That's why you imprinted in her that she would happily act for her loved father?" (Makoto)

"Honestly speaking, I didn't care about her relation with me though. I simply sounded out her dormant desires after the bleaching, and imprinted memories of an environment she would accept more easily. Seriously, I laughed, you know? She hated me that much, and yet, her

dreamed upbringing was that of being loved by me, grow her power straightforwardly, and contribute to society. Really, she walked a path that was completely contrary to that.” (Root)

“Root...” (Makoto)

“It is true that I probably surprised you needlessly. If it wasn’t a fun surprise for Makoto-kun, I apologize. But, is it really something to be so angry about?” (Root)

“...”

“Sofia and Lancer really created chaos in the world. If you want to, I can even show you the details of that damage in the future. They have to atone for that. If possible, by their own hands. Isn’t that right?” (Root)

“...”

It is true that, if possible, that’s how it should be.

If it is possible, that is.

I felt that these words had pretty distant meanings for the human me, and the dragon Root.

That’s right, because this is how I think, and in truth, I still think this way. Can it even be called atonement when you have to go all the way and do things like reviving and tampering with their memories?

Can it be recognized as the atonement of the Sofia that perpetrated them?

“The current Sofia is putting her all in her work. She is also tackling the reconstruction of Kaleneon with all she has. Not because of reasons like ‘the reward is good’ or ‘there’s a formidable enemy’, it is simply because she is happy that it is for the sake of the world. She also obtained the past she wished for. No one is unhappy about it, and I think it was a somewhat good decision though.” (Root)

“No one is unhappy, huh.” (Makoto)

As I thought, is this what they call a difference in views?

In the explanation of Root, there was no unpleasant scheme I felt there was.

No, giving me a surprise was a bit unpleasant though.

For him who has lived for a long time, it seems something like bringing back to life a hyuman that has died once is not that big of a deal.

Now that I think about it, even when Lancer changed a brave into a sword for his collection, it didn't seem like he did much to stop him, and even if he acts like a hyuman, it is probably wrong to talk to him with the sense of value of a human being.

He normally acts strangely like a hyuman, so it really confuses me sometimes.

No one is unhappy.

That's true.

"So that means...Sofia was reborn..." (Makoto)

At that time, Sofia was killed by Root.

That Sofia disappeared, and Root gave her the life she dormantly desired, and she was reborn.

Thus, in order to have her atone for the crimes she has committed even if for a bit, Root is having her work.

Haha.

Thinking again about it in that way, I could tell the indescribable disgust towards Root I felt when I saw Sofia had clearly been reduced.

I probably am also becoming pretty weird.

The opinions I have towards death that are inside me, there's times when it just doesn't hold much meaning when I am talking about it to someone on Root class.

In these kind of conversations, Shiki is the same sometimes.

"...Well, that's about it. It would have been fine to set her a bit younger, but that age was the most convenient for her to apply the techniques and

knowledge she obtained, so it just ended up that way. It is not like I was trying to check for the sexual preferences of Makoto-kun.” (Root)

...He doesn't have any hidden scheme, right?

Yeah, let's stop pursuing too deeply for now.

In the first place, this was an unexpected development anyways.

The real matter at hand is Rokuya-san and his group.

Regarding their immortality.

And then...I probably won't be able to hope for a careless blunder of Root regarding the dragon Futsu.

I was asked by Rokuya-san to keep secret about the latter one, so it is irritating that I can't tackle that subject.

“...Then, is it okay to count Sofia as a working force?” (Makoto)

These weren't words I muttered towards Root.

They were words that leaked out from my mouth to confirm with myself.

“It would help me if you do that. It seems like the misunderstanding has been dissolved a little. But it looks like you still have more. Fine then. Let's do a 'please teach me, Root-sensei'.” (Root)

For some reason, Root made a triumphant expression as he puffs his chest.

Even so, my brain may understand, but somewhere inside my heart still doesn't accept it completely.

How to say it, it is as if there's still some fuzziness in a corner of it.

But he is the one offering to tell me, so rather than pursuing that fuzzy feeling of mine, it would be better to just change the topic to something else.

“About the Adventurer Guild and the Adventurers of Origin.” (Makoto)

“!! It is as expected, or more like, you really go for the toughest spots, Makoto-kun. When I heard the name of Azu-kun at the guild, a corner of

my head was wondering if that might be the case though.” (Root)

“I heard a pretty different story from the one you gave me before. And so, I began to think that I would like to hear your side of it.” (Makoto)

“...I thought it might be possible, but...I see. You have met them huh, someone among them. By the way, can you tell me from who you heard it from?” (Root)

“...From a person named Rokuya-san.” (Makoto)

It should be fine to tell him that, aside from talking about Futsu.

Seems like they were friends to begin with anyways.

Or more like, it seems there were people that the woman Root had a physical relationship with after all.

With this pervert.

It is unthinkable for me.

It is already not a matter of being carnivorous or herbivorous.

“Him huh. Was he doing fine?” (Root)

As if asking for the present state of an old friend, Root makes nostalgic eyes as he asks me.

...This is the first time...I have seen Root with a face like this.

“Yeah, I think he was doing fine.” (Makoto)

“I see. As always, he was aloof from the world, loves to draw, and when he kills, he still makes those sad eyes?” (Root)

“No well, I have only talked with him, so I don’t know that much. It seems there’s the atmosphere of an impending battle, but I don’t have the intentions of being killed, so I don’t think I will be able to confirm.” (Makoto)

“Battle? Hmm, if I remember correctly, Makoto-kun’s objective was to bring the mercenary group there. Then...yeah, if it’s them, it might be possible. They are as always huh. I see, they are at that grand labyrinth. That Doma, he never reported anything to me.” (Root)

“You, don’t you have any intentions of taking a side?” (Makoto)

“None. If they are involved, I intend to silently watch over it. I also don’t intend to do much justification to the things you heard from Roku-kun. If he is the one who said it, it is all true. If I had to correct something, it is probably your words.” (Root)

“Mine?” (Makoto)

Then he admits that he made them immortal and tied them down?

If even that isn’t a matter to care about like with Sofia, I think I won’t be able to comprehend him for life.

“Regarding the part about what I said being different from what he said. Putting it correctly, isn’t it just that you heard things you didn’t hear from me? For example, the system of the Adventurer Guild. About the core of it.” (Root)

“!!”

So he has an idea of what I want to ask huh.

“And what happened to them as a result. Probably also about them disappearing from history’s front stage. So, is what you are going to ask something between those lines?” (Root)

“Yeah, if you are willing to tell me, please do. Honestly speaking, I think there’s no worse punishment than giving immortality to people. If you really see the Wise, the Japanese people as rare existences that should be welcomed, why did you do something like that to Rokuya-san and his group? If possible, I would want you to tell me in a way that I can accept.” (Makoto)

“...Of course, I will tell you. However, I don’t know if Makoto-kun will accept it. But there’s one thing I can say for sure, this is all past history that has already concluded, and the concerned party has accepted the result of it. I don’t know how much of a meaning it has inside of you that will make it acceptable or not, but I will properly tell you the truth.” (Root)

Again.

Past history.

Those words pierce sharply.

If it were about Toa's ancestors and Sofia, it would be another story, but with Rokuya-san and his group, the circumstances are different.

Since we are talking about immortality, can it really be called a matter of the past?

And in reality, Rokuya-san is currently alive.

...Then, has he hated Root? Has he not accepted it?

That's...

Root speaks out.

A story of long past where several familiar names appear.

Not even in the library of Rotsgard Academy it remains, but it is a story that without doubt existed.

My resolution wavers, and with my standing still not clear yet, the story involving the Guild of Root continued on.

Chapter 272: Toa's closure

I scratch my head.

Trace the beautiful wooden marks of the desk with my eyes.

“Past... Past huh.”

My voice leaks out in the room where no one is.

Root told me about Rokuya-san and his group without hiding anything.

What was his female self scheming at that time?

At the very least, from what I heard, he was the one who originally schemed about devouring the Superior Dragons, correctly speaking, absorbing their power and turning it into his own power which was what Sofia was doing. But he met the person who would be his husband, and that was stopped.

He revealed to me that there was a time when Doma and Azuma had been devoured by him. And...he also admitted the matter of the Adventurer Guild's establishment, about asking Rokuya-san and his group to become immortals, and on top of that, even the part about him asking them to not appear in the front stage of history in the future.

At the dawn of the Adventurer Guild, there was a time when the five major powers and the countries with a certain extent of influence were facing unbalance, so after discussion, they decided to lay low in order to avoid unnecessary sparks.

There were also a lot of other things. Really, now that I look back at it, I tried going for quite the low spots too, however...the answers that I got back were mostly things that I could understand.

Saying it honestly, I could understand, but I couldn't accept.

But that's only me as well.

Root, Rokuya-san and the others...properly respected that decision.

Even until now.

‘If one side were to truly not be okay with it, there would be sure antagonism in a part of it, right?’, is what I asked Root, and he didn’t say anything about it.

And in reality, Rokuya-san didn’t seem to hold any negative feelings towards Root.

What’s this. It feels stupid.

In the end, was I simply too stubborn with my shirking towards the word immortality?

The mindset of accepting immortality huh.

Even now, I still can’t understand it at all.

Just how much resolve do you need, just how much experience do you need to stack up, to make humans that were living peacefully in Japan accept this torture?

...

As I thought, I can’t understand.

In a future, maybe after the fight is over, I will try asking Rokuya-san about it.

But simply voicing it out in words to seek for an answer makes me feel incredibly bad.

What is it... why is it that I feel this way...?

“Waka-sama?”

“?!! What?” (Makoto)

When I checked the door, I noticed that it was open. A Highland Orc girl that is working at Tsige was looking at me with worry.

No good.

She probably even knocked before entering, and yet, I wasn’t able to notice.

“I called several times, but there was no response, so I got worried. You

were making an incredibly complicated expression but, did something happen with the guest just now?”

“I was pondering a bit. It sounds stupid, but it was something that has already concluded, and I’m not even a related party.” (Makoto)

“I see...”

“Looks like I have worried you, sorry. I will be returning to Lorel. The business there will probably end soon after all. One more push.” (Makoto)

“Leave the matters regarding this town to us. Lime is also doing his best, so if there’s anything of interest, we will let you know immediately.”

“Thanks. I will be counting on you.” (Makoto)

She bows once and leaves the room, and once again, silence returns.

But I didn’t sink into my swirl of thoughts again.

That’s right.

Right now, the matter of Tsige and Lorel come first.

Even if Japanese people are involved in it, it would be stupid if I were to forget the important things.

It is a bit vexing to call this a fortune, but regarding Rokuya-san and his group, it is nice that we won’t have to worry about killing them even if we go overboard.

Let’s properly wrap this up at the 20th floor.

And while at it, we will take care of the matter regarding Tomoki’s perfume, and bring the mercenary group back here.

Pang

I hit both of my cheeks lightly.

When the amount of things to think about increases, I just get lost in what to do.

There are indeed people who are able to multitask everything. But I...am the type who can’t.

I think I am a bit better in doing that than before. Even so, it would just be about average.

For a person that's acting as the representative of the company, while moving around the whole world, working in the Academy as a teacher, and has the objective of knocking down the Goddess, that's not something that should be lacking.

"...Now, it is finally the time. Let's go to Lorel." (Makoto)

The labyrinth wasn't confined, dark, and musty like I thought it would be, and it wasn't damp and humid, but I don't think that's lucky.

As a wry smile appears in my face, I cross the mist gate I myself created.

"He didn't seem to be convinced. What should I do? Should I return and once again...but he seemed to be busy... It would hurt to be hated..."

After a while of leaving the Kuzunoha Company, Root had stopped his steps.

Placing a hand on his lips, he mutters in a low voice.

Honestly, the anger that Makoto was directing at him was unexpected.

Whether it is the matter with Sofia, or the matter of the Adventurers of Origin; the latter one, he thought that even if it is Makoto, he wouldn't be involved in it, so when he heard that name come out from his mouth, Root was internally pretty shocked.

Even so, it was a story of the past where it was discussed peacefully, both sides accepted it, and had concluded. To think that Makoto would come snapping at it was out of expectations.

Even the matter of Sofia, it was a completely different reaction from what he expected of Makoto.

He will get surprised, but he won't get angry.

For Root who properly gave that buffoon a chance to atone, moreover, trained her so that she will never go against Makoto anymore when he set

it up so they meet again, the displeased face of Makoto when he asked regarding Sofia was bewildering for him.

In the past, there were several times with his husband –who he doesn't know where he is– that Root made him angry by stepping on landmine topics just like with Makoto. The feeling of 'what should I do?' was swirling inside of Root.

This will be digressing but, Root getting emotionally anxious is –without exaggeration– a thing that's on the level of only happening once every several centuries.

“Hm...as I thought, let's return. Where did he misunderstand, or what is it he didn't like so much, I have to properly hear it out and solve it. The time I can spend with people is only an instant. I don't want to create discord over insignificant things. Well th–” (Root)

The moment he reached a decision and was about to return, his hung down head sprung up as if by reflex.

At an intersection, Root's gaze was directed at the buildings across the street; more accurately speaking, it was directed at the far distance.

“For so long...really so long, I wasn't even able to feel your presence, and yet...” (Root)

The legs that had been directed at the Kuzunoha Company, began to walk towards a different direction.

Root could have been able to return to his original form to fly there, or used teleportation magic, but as if forgetting he is able to do those things, Root ran.

Slipping through the crowd of people with unbelievable speed, and crossing through the complicated alley he was passing for the first time as if he was familiar with it, his face maintained a smile.

And there was one other change in Root while running.

Root's height stretched, his chest got bigger, and his hair grew longer.

“Azu-kun, you really are here. In this town, you!” (Root)

The nostalgic and unforgettable presence that she feels at the outskirts.

For Root, that person is one of her irreplaceable friends.

Elysion grew, and in time, their religion was poured solely on the Goddess, Root left, Elysion was counted as one of the five major powers, the founding king was envisioned as a legend and sung on, and finally, the country was lost to the demon race.

That's how much time has passed for the Superior Dragon Root who was searching for the Adventurers of Origin without being able to even catch their presence.

Root was able to certainly feel the presence of one of them.

At the place where the now female Root was chasing after the presence, there was one house.

—Outskirts of Tsige.

These house with a garden is one of the residences build at the area of the successful people.

The access of the town is also decent, and it is the place that's specially yearned for by adventurers. And it is also where Root is heading to.

For a simple isolated house, it was big.

It is a house where an adventurer party live and it is also the formal place they gather at. It was easy to see that it wasn't a building constructed and sold, but a building that was ordered to be made.

Currently at the big entrance, there's one man and one beast.

His frame is big, and his physique is also good.

With a full body armor that didn't look like it proved any discomfort to him, he rang the bell with natural moves.

"Yees."

A person soon responded.

An adventurer's house is normally absent of people all day long since they are normally out questing, but luckily for the knight-looking man, it

seems there were people at home.

The door opens.

The person that showed up was the woman adventurer that had received a request from an old friend, Raidou, and was excavating for the old documents she had at the storage room, Toa.

“Who is it?!!” (Toa)

Toa looked at the man standing outside and the beast that was at his side, and gulped a breath.

A man whose whole body is covered in full silver colored armor, carrying a unique greatsword on his back, and is about 1.90m tall.

His age is a little before his thirties, his face is showing, and at various parts of his arms and feet, there were wounds of a variety of sizes.

And on the other hand, there’s the giant beast docile at his side.

It was a wild boar that was already on the level of being called a demonic beast.

These peculiar traits matched only one person in Toa’s memories.

“Could it be...you are...” (Toa)

“Knight...Aznoval. The one by my side is my loved horse—I mean, loved wild boar.” (Aznoval)

“...”

“Loved steed, Greenblue...” (Aznoval)

“Uryii~!”

Aznoval, the name that surfaced in Toa’s mind was exactly the name the man introduced himself with, and next, he continued by introducing the boar at his side.

For some reason he hesitated in saying it.

The wild boar that was unnaturally called Greenblue broke its docile attitude as if it didn’t even exist in the first place, and turned its head

towards the man that's most likely its owner and makes an unexpected cute cry.

As if trying to protest.

"Sorry about that. It is my loved steed, Greenblue. I suppose you are the safeguard of the Blue Oni dagger, Lapis. Am I...correct?" (Aznoval)

"You went through the trouble of visiting me here, but I don't belong to a family like that. I am simply an adventurer that's residing in this town."
(Toa)

When asked if she is the safeguard, she responded that she isn't from a family like that.

For a third party, this conversation would feel as if it didn't connect.

But for these two, it properly did.

"Onee-chan, there's a guest? Then, how about letting him i—"

"Rinon! Go back inside. He is someone that will be returning soon, so it's fine!" (Toa)

With a rough tone that was rare from her, Toa sends away her little sister that had come to the entrance.

The shoulders of Rinon jumped, and without responding, she ran to the inside of the house.

"Rinon... as I thought. I will explain so that there's no misunderstanding. I didn't come here to cause any harm to you." (Aznoval)

Hearing the name that Toa shouted, Aznoval nodded as if he had been convinced of something.

And at the same time, he noticed the caution of Toa, so he declared that he didn't intend to cause any harm to the sisters.

"Yeah, I don't think you are someone who would do that. But..." (Toa)

There's no guarantee of anything with only words, however, Toa accepted the words of the knight.

"Hiiragi Towa, Hiiragi Rio. There's no discrepancy in the sole clue I had.

It is settled huh.” (Aznoval)

“!!! I am Toa! That girl is Rinon! Something like a family name, we only use one at suitable times. We are sisters you can find anywhere, and I am an adventurer. I—! Don’t have a name like Hiiragi!!!” (Toa)

“...Sorry.” (Aznoval)

“?! ”

The name that Aznoval said was refuted in rage by Toa.

He simply accepted those words and slowly lowered his head deeply.

“I was unable to save your family from that folly, and was unable to protect you from the unreasonable blame, and on top of that, Towa—no, Toa, I ended up making you reject that very blood that flows in you. I am truly...sorry.” (Aznoval)

“...Is that something for you to apologize? I am not wishing for something like tha—” (Toa)

“But!” (Aznoval)

“Eh?”

Toa winced when Aznoval suddenly lifted his head up.

“I want you to understand at least this one thing. The successive generations of the Hiiragi household were always facing their duty in earnest. They appeased Lapis, and also conferred this power with humility. It is the same for that girl who lost Lapis at the wasteland.” (Aznoval)

For a moment, he looked not at Toa, but somewhere far away, and with wrinkles of anguish showing between his eyebrows, he looks straight at Toa and continues speaking.

“Please, I want you to take pride in that blood that flows in your body. It is fine if it’s not right this instant. I will definitely bring back Lapis back from the wasteland. That’s why, at the very least, your ancestors...” (Aznoval)

“Uhm...” (Toa)

“If you want to, I can help you revive the treatment the Hiiragi household received at those days in this Tsige. That’s why—” (Aznoval)

“Listen to what I’m trying to say!” (Toa)

“Ah, oh...okay.” (Aznoval)

“If it’s about that dagger, see, I have already found it myself. I won’t do something as selfish as saying I did it on my own though.” (Toa)

In the hands of Toa, there was something wrapped around a darkish brown cloth.

When she unwrapped the cloth, there was one dagger there.

What was once lost at the wasteland, picked up by the Highland Orcs, went to the hands of Makoto, and finally, after many a search, the dagger returned to Toa’s hands.

“It is...without doubt, Lapis. You became an adventurer on your own volition and came all the way to the wasteland and got back that dagger with your own effort?” (Aznoval)

The knight opened his eyes wide and mutters dumbfounded.

“I told you, it wasn’t on my own. I almost died several times, and it was actually a miraculous reversal. I am still here thanks to that person. After that, I was even blessed with a party...” (Toa)

While Toa was lining up several sentences, Aznoval once again looks at the house.

‘It is a good house’, that’s how he felt.

It is not by the standards of ‘it is luxurious’ or ‘it is big’.

He felt the atmosphere around the house, and his expression changed into a gentler one.

“I see... You...no, both of you sisters weren’t in solitude huh.” (Aznoval)

‘At least that’s a saving’, is what the tone of the knight felt it was saying as well.

“Yes, fortunately. And we have a place where we belong to, right here.

We properly have one in Tsige. Not in Lorel, but in this town.” (Toa)

Toa returns a definite refusal to the offer of reviving her household.

After a brief silence, Aznoval makes a gentle smile and nods once.

“Understood. The selfish worry in my heart was released. It seems this is a place that has taken care of you in several ways. Maybe because of the sudden title as a knight I received, I got a tad bit devoted –to the things that I couldn’t protect. It is certainly true that it was my own subjective impression that I should protect at least their descendants.” (Aznoval)

“No, that stance of yours has most likely saved a great amount of people. It was simply that a different person had already given Rinon and I its hand of salvation. Please, stay the way you are.” (Toa)

“Thanks, Toa. But I want to do something for you two. Do you have something you wish for? If it’s something I can do, I will do my best.” (Aznoval)

“Even if you ask me that... right now, the only thing I want is the safety of Tsige. Detailed things like how to help in that sense, I can’t think of anything at this moment.” (Toa)

“Hm, it is true that this town is looking for independence from Aion and acting pretty flashily. If it’s silencing the royal family...things would get too big. It might go against my promise with that person. What should I do...?” (Aznoval)

The latter half, Aznoval mutters as if asking to himself.

“That’s why, please forget about us. It is fine. My little sister and I will live our own lives. Please go help the people that are troubled somewhere, knight Aznoval.” (Toa)

“...Toa. Umu, really, thank you. Leaving aside how much of your wish I can fulfill, this Aznoval has certainly heard it. I will become your strength in some sort of way. Also, can you lend me Lapis for a bit?” (Aznoval)

“...Yeah, I don’t mind.” (Toa)

Toa gives the dagger to the knight.

Aznoval looks at Lapis in his hand with eyes of nostalgia, as if looking at something important, and then, brings out a dagger that was identical to Lapis from the sack of Greenblue and returns to Toa.

“Is that...Lapis?” (Toa)

“It is similar, but different. Fufu, looks like it was really treasured. Maybe because it was abandoned at the wasteland for a while, it seems to be slightly sulky though.” (Aznoval)

“...”

(Now that he says it, it does seem different from Lapis. But they look alike. The shape as well, but what is it, there's something in its atmosphere that's incredibly...) (Toa)

Even when Toa tried thinking about it, there was no answer in her memories and knowledge.

Obviously, she doesn't have an idea of what the legendary existence in front of her is trying to do either.

“If I hadn't heard that you had gotten it back yourself, I wouldn't have thought of going so far as to do this. However, now that I have heard such a story that heats my heart, I also want to answer in kind. With all I have.” (Aznoval)

“What do you mean by t—” (Toa)

Aznoval didn't answer the words of Toa.

In place of that, he closes his eyes, and begins chanting something with the dagger similar to Lapis in his hand.

“Guild skill, activate. Recast Overwrite. Lapis, maker Black Smith, type mage to assassin, breakpoint re-register...” (Aznoval)

“...”

For Toa, they were continuous unintelligible words. Mysterious words that didn't give off the sensation of magic activation for it to be an aria.

In time, the dagger, that wasn't Lapis and had a transparent blade,

disappeared as if melting into the air.

But the remaining Lapis shone several times and trembled, but the appearance didn't change at all as it calmed down in the hands of Aznoval.

"Here, back to you. I have customized it as a dagger for a combatant, you should use it." (Aznoval)

"Eh?!" (Toa)

"From what I see, you are mainly a physical attacker that prioritizes speed and deftness after all. Using a dagger that's a catalyst for magic would not be useful for your job." (Aznoval)

"It is true that I haven't used it properly, but..." (Toa)

"Please utilize it. Regarding its new uses, it would be best to have a trustworthy blacksmith appraise it for you. It would be a lot easier to understand than hearing it from me." (Aznoval)

"Aznoval-san..." (Toa)

"The name of Hiiragi, and the will of the dagger; it would probably be troublesome for the current you, so I will be taking both of them. From today on, this dagger is a dagger for your sake. If you like it, please do tell your children and grandchildren in the future. Well then Toa, we probably won't be meeting again, but I will be praying that you and the important people in your life will ripe numerously. Bye." (Aznoval)

"..."

There was no response from Toa. And it seems Aznoval was not wishing for it, he deftly rides the wild boar and leaves without turning back.

Gouging out the earth and creating gusts of wind, and yet, the wild boar left with surprising silence.

Was it because of nostalgia, or maybe the regret from parting, the eyes of Toa narrow.

"Ah, since I had the chance, maybe it would have been good to have him meet Raidou-san? But that's fine, I suppose. If they are a connection that's

destined to meet, they will definitely meet in time.” (Toa)

The moment Toa turned to confirm the back figure of Aznoval for the last time, the already small figure of the knight riding the wild boar had some white thing lunging at him from the side.

The wild boar made a sudden break without agitating and without making a racket, and the white something flies and rides on top of the knight.

Toa rubs both of her eyes.

But what she saw didn't change one single bit.

It looks like it is real. She confirmed the current situation, and makes one big sigh.

(It must be that. I think that's probably not something I should get involved with. It looks like that white thing is actually a woman, and the knight Aznoval is a man after all. There must be something. Yeah, let's just maintain that moving moment we had just now. It looks like he understood a variety of things, and I still haven't finished gathering the documents I was planning on sending to the Kuzunoha Company. Next is... right, when I am returning, I should not forget to have an Elder Dwarf craftsman look at this Lapis.) (Toa)

The door is silently closed.

“Rinon, your sister's throat is dry.” (Toa)

Toa requests something to drink from her little sister.

The matters that Aznoval voiced out, it was also bothering her, and so, now, it had dissolved and disappeared.

A smile that came from the bottom of her heart and light steps.

Toa, who had become an adventurer because of the chains of her past and blood, is finally able to lower that weight.

“Rinon?! It is fine with alcohol too! Bring it to the storage room~!” (Toa)

“What are you saying this early in the morning! I made tea just now, so

drink it before going to the storage room, okay?! You will definitely spill it after all!!” (Rinon)

Shouting, getting happy; those kind of changes in her sister amazed Rinon all the time.

Right now Tsige is in a lull state.

Toa and Rinon are passing a somewhat peaceful everyday life there.

Chapter 273: Intermission – At times, the misfortune gathering of Makoto is useful

“Even though I was mounted, I was knocked down by a humanoid living being. So there’s still new experiences to get huh.”

“Azu-kun. Aznoval... It is the real one, it is the real thing!!”

“No well, I don’t think there’s been a fake of me though... Root, from what I have heard, weren’t you living as a man?” (Aznoval)

“That’s right. It is true. But as the memories I passed with you guys revived, my body returned to that one too. It is definitely because of that! I didn’t notice I turned into a woman until you told me after all!” (Root)

The one that is enjoyably conversing while mounted is a tall woman with long straight silver hair.

A woman that would nail anyone on the ground when they catch a sight of her, golden proportions.

The shirt that is not the correct size was producing a strange sense of erotism.

And the one who was being ridden by such a shocking beauty was a knight that has armor covering his whole body.

It was a heavily unbalanced situation.

“Looks like you are quite the unstable living being, Root.” (Aznoval)

“This has its own fun. Fufufu, hey, that one there, that’s the mysterious abandoned boar that was on top of Azu-kun’s head at the time we separated, right? To think you really raised it. As expected of a being with finite span. With one glance, I can tell that it can even trample on illusory beasts.” (Root)

“I had...infinite time after all. It is until now that I was able to properly ride it and am able to communicate with its heart though... Oops, this talk would end up being long. Let’s stop it. As you can see, it is one of my trustworthy companions now.” (Aznoval)

“You really don’t change. You are just like how you were in the past.”
(Root)

“You too. As beautiful as ever. Also, I go out more frequently compared to the others, so this is something that I can tell...” (Aznoval)

“What?” (Root)

“It seems like you are doing well...with the Adventurer Guild. Even though it was a mere verbal promise... You have my gratitude. That’s why Rokuya-san, Haku-san, and Bia-san as well; we all decided on this. If anyone of us were to meet you again, we would represent everyone by telling you our gratitude. Root, thanks.” (Aznoval)

“...Aren’t you actually...holding a grudge on me?” (Root)

The words of Aznoval matched something that Root has always thought of in a part of her heart.

That both sides hold much gratitude.

Of course, within the possibilities that Root had hypothesized, the gratitude is classified in the types that are incredibly convenient, and in truth, most of her thoughts were that they may have a grudge on her.

However, the knight was acting as the representative of the Adventurers of Origin and told Root about their gratitude.

Root looks back at her conversation with Makoto.

‘Did you do that knowing how much pain comes with immortality –with eternity?’, and ‘Do you really think they have accepted it?’.

Being told what her heart was feeling, even Root was doubting the certainty of the promise Root had exchanged with Aznoval and his group a long time ago.

That was the reason why words of anxiety came out from her mouth towards the knight that she had a friendly relationship of shouldering each other in the long past.

“Grudge? Are you talking about the matter of living eternally?”
(Aznoval)

“Yeah.” (Root)

“It is true that I have a grudge on it, and I hate it as well.” (Aznoval)

“!!”

“...But, it is not towards you.” (Aznoval)

“Eh?”

“It’s the part about not thinking deeply of the meaning in dragging even Rokuya and the others. Regarding that point...I regret to the utmost my naivety at that time, and I also hate it. Of course, even now and for eternity.” (Aznoval)

“What do you mean by that? Guild Verse is a link skill between all of you. That’s why...what are you saying?” (Root)

“It is true that it was a linked skill. But the one that was actually able to utilize the various skills was me, and the others were simply on the standing of obtaining its benefits. In short, it is because I coincidentally had the Master rights –or at least that’s what I thought at that time. Obtaining immortality, obtaining eternity; I thought about using that time to begin researching and make it so that I am able to hold this skill by myself.” (Aznoval)

“No well, even I have been unable to clarify the skill of you guys all this time, and transferring the user rights to an individual is just...” (Root)

Root had completely returned to his female way of talking and speaks of Aznoval’s thoughts.

The knight nods with unhidden self-derision towards the bewildered Root.

“Yeah, just as you say. Even when I researched for several centuries, even when I searched for several centuries, the situation where I was basically trying to grasp straws didn’t change at all. That’s right. I intended to shoulder that myself...for eternity. And yet, this is how it ended up as. Acting so much like a knight, and yet, in the end, I have dragged all of my companions and have been unable to save a single one of them. If I could,

I would want to kill myself.” (Aznoval)

“!”

“Well, that’s how it is. And so, we are now here. Just as I said before, I have no grudge towards Root who has raised the guild into a healthy and neutral organization, and has maintained it that way. I am simply grateful for it. It makes me feel that there’s point in me still being alive.” (Aznoval)

“Azu-kun.” (Root)

“Also, just as promised, we haven’t taken the side of a political force, and haven’t raised a country either. Existences that can’t be seen at the front stage of the world, existences that don’t exist. No problem, right?” (Aznoval)

“Yeah. But I didn’t think I wouldn’t even be able to search for you guys, you know?” (Root)

“I was determined to do a thoughtless research. I also didn’t want to bother you in the time when the guild was in the very moment of beginning to move. It is not like I hated you.” (Aznoval)

“You see, actually, I wanted Azu-kun and the others to cooperate by becoming the top brass of the guild and the strongest direct corp, you know? I even prepared the seats for that sake... A lot happened... I wouldn’t have let you be bored. Even if the name of the Adventurers of Origin were to disappear, it would be safe to leave your name as the top brass of the guild.” (Root)

“Sorry. But don’t you have young and reliable ones now? Was it Sofia? She has your blood, right? It looked like she was doing her job with pride. Isn’t that plenty enough?” (Aznoval)

Aznoval brings out the name of the adventurer he just met and praises her.

But Root shook her head to the sides in sadness.

“That would never become a substitute for you guys. Yeah, such a person doesn’t exist to begin with. It is because it is you guys that I wanted to

welcome you. The most Sofia can do is...be a proxy.” (Root)

“How strict. I do think pampering parents are questionable, but if you don’t at least recognize her achievements every now and then, she will be sad, you know? And, by the way... can you please get up already? I have to return to Lorel after all.” (Aznoval)

At some point in time, their bodies were sticking to each other, and Aznoval and Root were conversing as if having a lover’s talk.

Aznoval who was at the bottom, placed both hands on Root’s shoulders and lifted her body up.

“Eh? You intend to return now? After living for 2 thousand years already?” (Root)

“I haven’t lived so long! I haven’t reached the millenniums yet. Well, I did think for a second about having a meal together at least.” (Aznoval)

“In that case—!” (Root)

“No. The moment I saw you trying to take off the buttons of your shirt, I once again remembered what kind of person you were. I am not the type that likes doing it in the outskirts. I will skip all those kind of adventures.” (Aznoval)

“Then I will properly endure until we go to a room somewhere!” (Root)

‘What’s with that ‘then’?’, the uneasiness that the knight had was correct in a sense.

“It reminds me of the words of Munemori, good grief. You haven’t changed at all. Your appearance, and the inside as well.” (Aznoval)

“That person’s words?” (Root)

“He said that when you are together with us, you are either a disappointing beauty, or a full score slut. You can call it a true bullseye there.

“...There was no ‘perfect beauty’ or ‘wife’?” (Root)

“There was. When you are together with other people, you are close to

that. But there's no fun in that, so he said that he liked you the w—no, that's fine. Seriously, what a lovestruck guy.” (Aznoval)

“He said something like that? I see...” (Root)

Skillfully moving Root who was immersed in the memories of the man that she had raised her love with, Aznoval lightly pats away the earth on his armor.

When he stood up and stretched, he looked at his companion Greenblue.

The wild boar, that was silently resting as it watched over the course of events, received the gaze of his master and lifted its body.

“Whatever the case, I was glad I met you, Root. Until the day destiny brings us together again—?!” (Aznoval)

Aznoval was trying to one-sidedly give his farewells, but both Aznoval and Greenblue suddenly turned their faces to a certain direction.

Root also did the same a second late.

However, different from the perplexed face of Aznoval, the face of Root was showing distinct displeasure.

It could be said that the thing where they are gazing at was outside the boundaries of understanding.

“I didn't know at all that the royal family of Aion was connected with them, but I see. The reason they were able to turnaround the situation when in danger was because of this huh.” (Aznoval)

“As expected of Azu-kun. You can already grasp their identity huh. Hah... It is true that it is because I was expecting this turn of events that I am here today in Tsige though. Being ruined this long awaited reunion that can be called a miracle... It really pisses me off.” (Root)

“Such a dangerous bunch have allied with the Aion kingdom which is the lowest within the five ma—no, the four major powers. Just when did they form an amity?” (Aznoval)

“It was pretty recent. Adding to it, there's one mixed in the Limia hero's

party. It is extremely rare for two swords to have come out in the present day.” (Root)

“The swords of the Goddess huh. Thinking about their *raison d’etre*, that’s a valid point. The people that caused the coup d’etat in this country were an organization that had antecessors of a religion of a half God after all.” (Aznoval)

“Azu-kun, for someone that declares to have the acting principle of using muscles over brain since a long time ago, you really don’t move imprudently. Your information gathering and intelligence; I don’t know how you do it, but it is incredibly precise. Don’t tell me, are you actually only faking being a knight?” (Root)

“Stop it please. It hurts quite a lot being told that. I am putting my life on the line in being a knight.” (Aznoval)

“It is coming from the mouth of a woman that was rejected, so I won’t stop~. At any rate, the half God church, no matter how many times it is crushed, they dive underground and come back. It hurts my head. But this is also within expectation. This is my job huh. It is fine Azu-kun, I will be talking with that. I won’t let it touch one finger of Tsige.” (Root)

Letting out a small sigh, Root encourages Aznoval to leave.

It seemed like she had some sort of idea about what the existence approaching is.

But that’s the same for Aznoval.

It looks like they already had a grasp of the circumstances surrounding Tsige and Aion, and also the one that is at the back of it.

‘Then, I will leave this to Root and head back to Lorel’, is not what the unmoving knight did.

He stepped half a step to the front of Root, and seemed to be prepared to confront the existence that’s the Sword of the Goddess.

“Azu-kun?” (Root)

“In Tsige, there’s the descendants of the Hiiragi household living there,

you see. Most of the reason why I came to this town was because of this. It is impossible for me to pass by such a dangerous thing of unknown objective.” (Aznoval)

“Hiiragi... Ah, if I remember correctly, within the group at the Adventurers of Origin, there was one of the humans who was named Hiiragi. I remember now, Adusa Hiiragi.” (Root)

“Yeah. Adding to that, that person died before the agreement with you and the guild. The place where my hopeless younger brother got engaged with was the Hiiragi household.” (Aznoval)

“Brother... Nagi-kun?! Then could it be...that Toa is...?!” (Root)

“It is already a diluted blood, but well, yeah. Really, I am a useless person who just can’t save the people that I really want to save no matter what. However, I am impressed that you could tell Toa was a Hiiragi. She is an undisputable top quality adventurer that came to the wasteland on her own volition and got back the Blue Oni dagger, Lapis.” (Aznoval)

“Actually, the one that is soon coming here also has business with that girl. And that Lapis is the underlying cause of it.” (Root)

“That’s a dagger that was synthesized with the guild skill and has a power close to the Desire Sword of Munemori, but the evolution of it was only brought out a few moments ago, you know? What’s this about ‘underlying cause’, Root? If she is involved, I definitely won’t back down. Please tell me.” (Aznoval)

“Desire, you say... Was it such a monstrous dagger? No, the problem is not the power of the dagger. It is because of the reason of how Toa got it back.” (Root)

“I heard that she obtained the cooperation of her companions and the town though.” (Aznoval)

Aznoval recalls the conversation he had with Toa.

From what he remembers, that’s what she said.

It definitely wasn’t on her own.

“Yeah. And within those people, the one that lended the most assistance was the Kuzunoha Company. They guided her into the way to get back the dagger, or you could say, they directed it that way. Depending on how it is explained, it might create a crack between the relationship of the representative there and Toa.” (Root)

“If we are talking about guiding, then it would certainly be considered cooperating, but when you talk about directing it, it is not always the case. Hmph, and in truth, didn’t that company do something quite gray there?” (Aznoval)

“I won’t negate that. But the Kuzunoha Company’s representative, Raidou –or Misumi Makoto-, is a Wise that was kidnapped to this world on the whim of the Goddess, and his roots aren’t those of a villain. And at present, he is becoming an irreplaceable existence in this Tsige lined together with the Rembrandt Company. I can’t have the relationship of him and Toa, who is becoming adventurer-like, to crumble.” (Root)

“So it might become a hole in the ant’s nest that could lead to the town’s destruction huh. Wise... a japanese person. This person that’s calling himself Raidou, looks like he is quite the naive type. To think he would become such a spark in this kind of situation by his own volition.” (Aznoval)

Root didn’t say anything about Aznoval who connected the word Wise with a japanese person as if it were natural.

The circumstances of Makoto are different from the others, and while he is hyuman, he is a Wise, and he is also Japanese.

And in turn, it would make the interpretation of Aznoval slightly wrong, but Root didn’t show any signs of explaining at all as she continued the conversation.

“It is not completely his responsibility though. I won’t deny that he is naive either. Because of it, his guard at night is thoroughly tough and it is troublesome.” (Root)

“...For some mysterious reason, my impression of Raidou has improved. Or more like, I pity him. You are already trying to make a pass on him?

Keep it moderate.” (Aznoval)

“Anyways...so that means, within the plans to crumble Tsige –which is practically akin to a firm rock– from the inside, the one that has the highest chance by stirring up distrust and anger between Toa and Raidou. The Sword of the Goddess that’s coming here seems to be the strategist type of magician after all. In my personal opinion, when it comes to Tsige and the Kuzunoha Company, I am a bit biased, so I came here in secret.” (Root)

The words of ‘moderate’ from Aznoval were ignored by Root and she continued explaining the current situation.

“On top of that, in this kind of important situation, it is the type that moves itself huh. Is it because it is lacking in trustworthy subordinates, or maybe because it is the type that doesn’t trust anyone aside from itself; whichever it is, if they plan on utilizing Toa in their conspiracy, I won’t forgive it. You are also here, so let’s swing my sword in a level where it is almost stepping onto the front stage. What do you think about that, the person over there?” (Aznoval)

The words of the knight were sent to a direction different from Root, and in the place that resonated, there’s a woman who was dressed in lightweight mage equipment.

A human.

There’s no companion with her, and from looks alone, it seemed as if she was a magician wearing a robe as casual wear and holding a staff.

But looking at it carefully, you could tell that that equipment is made of high grade materials.

If she were to fight with a dragon as she is, she would be able to. At the very least, that’s the level of preparation she had, and the two of them could tell that in an instant.

“Is that your assessment of me? Or is it regarding you fighting with me?”

“Oh, sorry about that. I would be grateful if you were to forget about my assessment of you. I am a very ordinary knight you can find anywhere,

name's Azu. It would be great if I were to know your name, Sword of the Goddess." (Aznoval)

"...I repudiate disclosure of information. About your assessment of me, the former was exactly right, and the latter was practically all correct. I only have one dependable companion, but that one is currently acting separately. Also, regarding you fighting me, do whatever you want. It all amounts to who crushes the other after all."

She doesn't introduce herself.

The woman ignores the question and voices out her displeasure of being called the Sword of the Goddess by the knight.

"Having contact with Toa is not something I can agree to, personally and as an ally of the adventurers, Alte Barrett." (Root)

"...Falz. Turning into a woman, turning into a man; you really are a hectic person. What's this about? I am under the orders of the Goddess-sama and am going to save Aion, and subjugate the rebels. It is true that she didn't say anything about Tsige, but they are trying to go independent from a country, that also falls into the area of a coup d'etat, and it is not something proper to do. Is it wrong to do what I have to do in order to make it properly return to Aion kingdom?" (Alte)

Being called her name by Root, she clearly made a displeased expression.

Her face, her neck, and her arms and legs that are sticking out from her equipment as well; they were all pure white and beautiful as if saying that suntans are evil.

Her blond hair was shining to the point you would think it is actually made of gold.

The woman that's apparently named Alte Barrett is without doubt a hyuman that possesses beauty the Goddess would like.

And that beautiful voice that came out from her was also filled with faith to the Goddess, and was not holding a single doubt to her own actions.

Aznoval leaked a strained laugh probably as a substitute to his impressions about that part of her.

“About fighting with you, I am neutral to the end. But I am simply saying that I don’t like having the adventurer Toa utilized in your plans. That’s why, if you are not going to rethink this, I will personally be getting in your way.” (Root)

“And for me, Toa is one of the people I have to protect. Just means that, I can’t overlook this as a knight passing by.” (Aznoval)

Aznoval continues to the words of Root and makes his standing clear.

Unsheathing the japanese sword-like greatsword of wide width on his back, he takes a stance with it, and chants something. When he did that, the width of the sword in his hand increased, and settled into a truly strange shape.

It was too big to be called a katana, a shape that lacked balance.

If we leave aside the point of the size, it would be a sword that’s similar to the short sword Masamune.

“Wow, you suddenly bring that out. Azu-kun, as expected, you really do understand.” (Root)

“I am counting on you for support. If we rampage to an extent where it would be a disturbance, this person will understand that this is not a fight she should take.” (Aznoval)

“Are you saying this will become a battle of attrition? It is a peculiar sword, but that doesn’t matter for me. Falz –no, Root probably only wants to pester me with words anyways.” (Alte)

“Now, I wonder about that. At the very least, if I were you, I would drop that thought about defeating him quickly, Alte Barrett.” (Root)

“Unless it is the Goddess herself, that’s impossible.” (Aznoval)

“Not only me, but even the Goddess. That contempt of yours, learn it with your own body, low life.” (Alte)

At the outskirts of Tsige, several pillars of light, thunderous sounds, and

magic power flew about.

In this pressing situation, the emergency adventurer team of Tsige moved promptly, and they arrived just a few moments after it began.

It was truly a fast response.

However, the place had the remains of a battle, but the concerned party was not there, and not even a corpse either.

The next day, the investigation came out with a truly foolish conclusion that it was a battle where there had to be at least a Superior Dragon and several High Spirits fighting.

The staff that was doing the investigation was truly skilled, but...the reality of things is only known by the three that were at Tsige that day.

The connection of Toa and Makoto had brought a legendary knight and the oldest Superior Dragon to Tsige in this day.

The day the related two will learn that this had secretly saved the town will be in a far future.

Chapter 274: Outbreak of War

This is probably the last.

19th floor, Grave palace, deep area.

Standing at the front of the teleport formation for the next floor, I nod.

It is a plan that I had Tomoe and Mio hear out, and made some retouches to.

Even when we have already arrived at one step before our goal, I still haven't been able to think of a way to break the heart of Rokuya-san and his group, the Japanese people that have accepted immortality.

We are going to be marching into the enemy's territory, and without killing anyone, we have to gain their cooperation including the person that hates me. Moreover, there's no doubt that there are several forces there that are on a level that can be considered a threat to the Kuzunoha Company.

No matter how you look at it, there's no doubt that this is a big challenge.

That's why I think the idea that came out after cleanly piecing the information at the hotel was a miracle.

...The trigger of it was the casual conversation of Iroha-chan and Akashi-san though.

"Now then, looks like this will be a big job. My blood is boiling."

While touching the blade of her katana, the silver haired mode Tomoe looks at me with a smile.

It is not as if this floor was challenging enough to warrant an enhancement.

It is because we will be needing that level of strength from Tomoe on what's coming ahead, so I gave her the power beforehand.

Tomoe wasn't there when the incident with Root happened, so she

probably feels happiness at having a place to utilize her power aside from training.

“It will be difficult not to crush anyone, but if it’s the order of Waka-sama, I will carry it out perfectly-desu wa. But if possible, I would like to show people like Rokuya some pain. I wonder if that thing will stand in my way.” (Mio) Mio, who now has glossy straight hair extending till her waist, said some dangerous stuff at the latter half as she laughs and narrows her eyes.

That figure of hers was gloss itself.

Tomoe’s smile has seductiveness in it, but Mio’s gestures have become more and more sexy lately.

Right now she is leaking out bloodlust from here and there, so if possible, this is the kind of gesture I would prefer to just look at instead of being in the receiving end.

But, in my personal opinion, I would like Mio to confront Haku Mokuren-san, Ginebia-san, or Rokuya-san depending on the situation.

Most of the reason she is like this is because ‘he pointed his blade at me’, but even if our thoughts are different, our desired pairings were the same.

“Bringing this much here, moreover, we have even received a ring from Tomoe-sama that’s only appropriate to call a sacred treasure...this Beren, if it’s today, I would be able to crush thousands!” (Beren) ...

Frankly speaking, I will be having Beren, Hokuto, and Shii, take on what’s probably the toughest role today.

Because, excluding the Adventurers of Origin, they will be fighting against practically everyone, and until things are settled, they will have to endure.

At first, I told the three that I was thinking about increasing the number of personnel, but their answer was the substantiality of the ‘equipment’.

The picnic side probably has less than a hundred, and we have analyzed

the information we have gathered until now.

There's quite the skilled ones that are S-class at the 20th floor, so I was thinking about calling Lime, Akua, Eris, and the elite four Arkes, but to my surprise, all three of them told me to wait.

They told me they wished for perfect equipment and the permission to utilize their full strength.

The three probably had some sort of plan.

There were several floors that were tough enough I would want to use them as training for the Kuzunoha Company, so that might be influencing too.

That's why Beren got the permission of Tomoe and Mio, and also Shiki and Tamaki to bring a big amount of weapons that looked okay to bring.

Since a while ago, he has been looking at the ring Tomoe gave him with a face filled with motivation. It is an item that lets you use Asora like a storage.

For someone like me who is not good at the technical stuff, I simply see it as an item that opens a storage of big capacity.

Tomoe nodded when I said that, so the effect must not be far from my understanding.

It is not like you can just freely use it. Every time, you will expend a decent amount of magic power, so Beren will probably be using most of today's magic power utilizing this.

"Ninja costume. As long as I have this, there's already no worthy opponent. Whether it is to act as a wall, support, or damage dealer, I will show that I can fulfill those roles." (Hokuto) ...The second one.

The big body of Hokuto was dressed in a ninja costume that felt incredibly out of place. A ninja look.

The motivation of the person himself, who recently changed into it, was quite high.

At the last area of this floor, there was one trap that was on a different

level from the rest, and one of his arms was blown away, but the treatment has already been done.

Well, it may look weird, but its defense is high, and in the hidden parts of the clothe, there's ornamental equipment that enhances it.

He is a high level Arke that can hunt adventurers like crazy with only his bare hands and skills to begin with. With training on top of that, and coordination as well, if it is the current Hokuto, even if the opponent is the legendary mercenary group, I don't think his fighting power would lack to them.

His body technique and magic working together are without doubt powerful after all.

The only thing is that Hokuto doesn't call it ninjutsu, but ninjutu, His way of speaking is clearly not that of a ninja, which is the only problem point of his.

“Even though you let us accompany you, the ones who will be doing the toughest work today will be Waka-sama's group. On top of that, I even received assistance from Akua-sama and Eris-sama. Personally, I won't be able to recover from that for a while. It is like, ‘mercenary group, prepare yourself’, kind of thing.” (Shii) I thought Shii would be the one who would be the happiest in having reinforcements, and yet, the moment I brought out the names of Akua and Eris, she said ‘there's no need, I can do it’, and suddenly changed her attitude.

After telling them the plan, everyone said something weird like: ‘we will defeat them all with a homerun’.

At the belt around her waist, there's a number of multicolored experimental sedges. At her arm, there's a bracelet that shines a pale green light, and at her ears, there's new earrings. 菅> She said: ‘I will be fighting with my all, as a physical type Forest Oni, and as an elf ancestor’.

She doesn't use a bow, and she isn't that good at magic, so those words were pretty rare to hear from Shii.

By the way, I called Lime to the hotel just in case.

I don't think there will be an opponent appearing today that he wouldn't be able to buy time against.

Truly the meaning of insurance.

"...Everyone, ready?" (Makoto)

Thinking that it is about time, I try speaking out, and what was returned were the same gazes.

Okay.

Just as planned, I will be the first one entering the teleport formation.

Enveloped in the light that I have already grown used to, there's a 9 out of 10 chances that there will be a preemptive strike poured at me the moment the scenery changes.

Or maybe there will be a negotiation.

"Like hell that would be possible huh." (Makoto)

Even if I could guess it from the words of Rokuya-san, what welcomed me the moment I appeared alone, was the bloodlust of a battlefield.

Also, the attack with no questions asked.

Not only arrows, there were even javelins, daggers, adzes, a variety of spells like offensive magic, debuffs, barriers being deployed; the types of debuffs were pretty plentiful.

"What a spectacle. But it is still not a threat." (Makoto)

I do a few steps forward.

My head is calm.

Currently, what's the scariest would be the surprise attack of Rokuya-san.

And the unknown power of the other Adventurers of Origin like him.

In other words...my beginning move is...

"?!!!"

I set Sakai to perception and search, and grasp the fighting force of the

other side.

At the same time, the Magic Armor that had its concealment effect released had caught the eyes of everyone as it appeared.

Of course, this body constructed of magic power was steadily perceived by the other side, and maybe because of surprise or fear, there was some sort of atmosphere going around the place.

The attacks stopped –for only a small frame of time though.

The attacks raining down, the magic coiling about; in this space of time I was given, I evaporate both of those with the shockwave that the Magic Armor released.

If Sakai can't detect them, there's nothing I can do, but beginning with Rokuya-san, there's no presence that might be of an Adventurer of Origin.

And everything I wanted to grasp, I was able to.

After several seconds, a number of presences appeared at my back.

Everyone has arrived.

Thanks to the network that Mio has connected with all six of us, the information is linked, and we are able to coordinate without any mistakes.

“We still don't know how Rokuya-san and his group will be involved in this, so don't lower your guard--” (Makoto) !!

The attack resumes.

The wave of magic attacks that were like a downpour.

On top of that...

“Fumu, it is quite the stuffy visage, but it is not on the level of Rokuya-jano.” (Tomoe) Tomoe disclosed the skill and exposes the assassin-like corps that were trying to come in contact with us.

There's seven.

While at it, I burn the people that were most likely doing long ranged attacks to provide support.

Tomoe had her katana directed at the frontline unit, and Beren's group of three came to her front and take a stance.

"They got us first, but let's charge as well!!" (Beren)

Beren shouts without looking our way.

"Of course. I will blow them away to an extent that's not fatal~!" (Shii)
"There was no need to even propose it, we are all on the same mindset huh. I was with the intention of bringing it to a melee fight and cause a disturbance to begin with. We are overwhelmingly at a disadvantage in terms of numbers after all." (Hokuto) When bringing it to a melee confrontation in those kind of situations, there's the need to be prepared for death, but there was no light of desiring death in the eyes of the three.

They rushed like bullets aiming at the assassins, and in a second, two of the seven were rolling on the ground with good momentum, and had went out of combat.

Beren didn't stop moving.

Swinging the big axe that's in his hands with all the strength of his body, he throws it at the stronghold. Right after, he activates the power of the ring and brings out a new axe to his hands, and the assassin that was aiming at the supposedly barehanded Beren was repelled by his weapon.

Okay. This is on a level that can be a fight.

In that case...

"As expected, it begins from now on huh. Can't expect much from the traps either. Leaving aside their numbers, the quality is pretty high."

"Rokuya-san, you said there was a 7:3 chance that they would be going through the Buggy Palace, even the traps, that side's where our real setup..."

"Now now, I have already contacted them, so the unit there will probably return in a few minutes. Let's do our own job."

"?!"

When I turn around, there's the shadow of three people.

I couldn't detect them at all even with the perception Sakai.

Moreover...it wasn't only Rokuya-san, but the other two as well.

"...You really like surprising from the back..." (Mio)

Mio takes a fighting stance and makes a chilly whisper.

"The reason you didn't attack us as it is, was it because of leeway, or maybe conceitedness? Which one should I take it as?" (Tomoe) Tomoe's words were tinged with slight anger.

If they weren't putting any airs, they should have attacked just like that, and yet, they didn't do that and were even talking on purpose to have us notice, which most likely rubbed both Tomoe and Mio in the wrong way.

"No way. We wanted to watch your playing hand a bit more, but since it was such an unexpected situation, we hurriedly came down. This here can hide me together with my companions, but it is an inconvenient item that doesn't let me attack as it is. The limitations are many." (Rokuya) As he said 'this', Rokuya-san made a hiding gesture.

Together with his companions. Being able to hide your presence this perfectly is enough to make it a scary skill.

"..."

"What's with that outrageous magic power? Honestly speaking, it hit my guts. Even in my long life, I haven't seen anyone with as much magic power in its body as you." (Rokuya) "Who knows. People call me things like 'Devil' though. I don't understand the reason well." (Makoto) "...So you were quite the racoon. Looks like my reading was wrong. I thought you were more of the honest type though." (Rokuya) "And so, I take it the one there is the Muse Danger, Haku Mokuren-san, and the Over Mash, Ginebia-san?" (Makoto) "..."

Eh?

From their looks and equipment, there's probably no mistake, but the two who are gazing at me are silent.

Are they not?

If that's the case, that would be a bit uncool.

“...I am an Arrow Dancer. I am not a religious person, so there's no way I would take a job that sticks to a God.” (Haku) “...I am a priest or a bishop. I don't remember being in a job that doesn't sound like it has any relation to priesthood..... Why do you know that?” (Ginebia) They both probably have strong special jobs, unique jobs.

But it seems like they don't have a good impression of its name.

They mutter this as they turn their faces to the side.

In the case of the Adventurers of Origin, the things called jobs were probably born from the power called Guild Verse, and it is most likely strictly close to the ones currently at the guild.

They probably can't set the names of their own jobs.

Well, this is convenient.

It seems it is still not the time to do what I asked of Tomoe and Mio after all.

I wanted to buy some time.

If we are able to do that with these three without the need of a fight, that would be most welcomed.

“Ah, Shougetsu-kun huh. If it's him, he might have known things like this.” (Rokuya) Rokuya-san scratched his head, and while making a wry smile, he spoke out the possibility he thought of.

It is exactly that.

“Later, I will go to the Osakabe house and give him a scolding.” (Haku) “It seems there's the need to teach that mongrel just how much of a taboo it is to lightly speak the secrets of a woman.” (Ginebia) Mongrel?

It seems like my utterance has send sparks flying at Shougetsu-san.

It is a rare case where I am not affected much by it, but this is important.

Sorry, Shougetsu-san.

Being at the hotel is good payment, so please forgive me for this.

(Waka, we are done.) (Tomoe)

(Here as well, with no problems.) (Mio)

Okay.

I received the report I wanted to hear from Tomoe and Mio.

From here on, the true battle will begin.

Let's do our best.

"Rokuya-san, here they come." (???)

"?!"

"Good grief, looks like they were able to fix it huh." (Rokuya) I couldn't feel any magic power, yet, a voice resonated from the whole floor.

...

"Something is...coming." (Makoto)

From our surroundings, several presences appear.

Looks like it is not a direct attack though...

As if telling myself, and the other two, I mutter.

Even if my voice itself didn't reach, it was also relayed to Beren and the others thanks to Mio.

It is true that this is enemy territory.

It is obvious that the opponent is at an advantage.

"Because of Takane-kun, my spirit received damage." (Haku)

Haku-san.

"Me too." (Ginebia)

And Ginebia-san also responded with slight grudge in her voice.

Takane, huh. It isn't an Adventurer of Origin.

It is a magic power I can't detect with Sakai, and the voice that resonates from the whole floor is definitely not that of a natural voice, it sounded artificial.

Is it the labyrinth manager, designer, or whatever it was?

“So you were buying time huh.” (Makoto)

So I was way too optimistic in thinking the timing of Rokuya-san appearing was convenient for us.

Hurry.

The thing we need to do the most, we have to do it in the time that we are still able to do follow-ups for Beren and the others.

While asking for the objective of them appearing before us, I form an aria without letting it out from my mouth and construct several spells.

“Sorry about this, but I will be returning the question of Tomoe-dono just now. For someone that’s trying to do a reckless fight in the enemy’s territory, you guys are way too leisure. Is that conceitedness, or maybe something that surpasses leeway?” (Rokuya) Words that had no trace of him actually being apologetic.

But for some mysterious reason, it didn’t anger me.

“You are a rude man as always. I don’t know what you intend to do, but I would like to teach you the etiquette you have to show towards the strong.” (Mio) ‘Are you able to take it?’, is what Mio’s face was saying.

It was clearly a taunt, and also a threat.

And at almost the same time, the several presences teleported.

This is...

“What a coincidence. If possible, I would like to do that as well. Leaving aside Raidou-kun, if I had to choose between Tomoe-dono and Mio-dono, I would say Mio-dono is the easier one to deal with.” (Rokuya) “! Is that so...” (Mio)

Not only did Rokuya-san evade the taunt of Mio, he returned it straight at her.

In my personal opinion, I feel like it would be most comfortable to fight them evasively in a group fight though.

But Mio seems like she is pretty hyped up now.

I am also bothered by the Marikosans that appeared as if encircling us.

The one that I met at the Alt floor...doesn't seem like she is there.

"Paradise Protector, Guardian; Sharp Blade of Determination, D-Rapier; Conviction, White Card." (Makoto) "!"

I activated three spells in succession.

I cut off the left arm of the Magic Armor to place support magic on everyone. I went through the trouble of utilizing the spell that Shiki and Tamaki had recently thought of.

Each one respectively is: specialty enhancement, power enhancement, status ailment nullification. On top of that, thinking about how enemies might obstruct my casting, I expended the Magic Armor's magic power to activate it, and yet, in the end, there was not a single obstruction from them.

Fumu.

Well, no problem with me if they are going to let me do it, but in that case, what's up with this number of Marikosans?

Red, blue, yellow, white, black, gray...well, they are colorful.

There's 12 surrounding us.

They are puffing out their chest and crossing their arms.

Their beards are also incredible.

Kaizer, toothbrush, chin, sides, and round.

It is like a trade fair.

"Then, Marikosans, here I go." (Takane)

"Oooh!!"

The voice of a man that's resonating from the whole floor commanded.

The voice also felt like that of a mature woman. There's several voices interlaced.

However, the more I see, the more I think that the Marikosans would look better without the beard.

“Invite, Duel Area.” (Takane)

“?!!”

As always, I couldn’t feel the flow of magic power at all.

Haku Mokuren-san and Ginebia-san suddenly disappear.

Seriously, I feel like I am fighting against a God that rules this place specifically.

Can’t take it.

But well, from the way they call it, it doesn’t seem to be the ruler here though.

“Tomoe-san?!” (Mio)

Mio’s voice.

When I turn to look at Tomoe, there was no one.

However, she is here.

I can feel the presence of Tomoe in a pretty far away place.

And there, there’s the presence of two other people.

“Forced teleportation huh. How dangerous.” (Makoto)

Invite, Duel Area.

If it’s just as the name implies, it should be like teleporting the players into a battle area like in most MMO’s.

The dungeon design itself is game-like.

The manager of this place probably gets along well with Rokuya-san and his group.

At any rate, two vs one huh.

The numbers don’t match.

“Takane, what’s the meaning of this?” (Rokuya)

Oh.

So even for Rokuya, this matching was unexpected?

“It may be sudden but, there’s a change of plans. Restraining that person would be too bad of a match for Rokuya-san, so I acted on my own accord.” (Takane) ‘That person’, does it mean me?

“I am aware of that, but...I can’t just take the easy part.” (Rokuya) And the easy part would be Mio huh.

Even if we are fighting in this place, moreover, with a restriction where killing is not victory, I think he is underestimating Mio too much.

I don’t think he has some pinpoint equipment and powers that bring him scary advantage against Mio.

“No no, she is the Calamity Black Spider. She simply obtained intelligence and a master, but that doesn’t make it easy. Well then, I am counting on you.” (Takane) “H-Hey—!” (Rokuya)

That voice disappeared together with Rokuya-san, and...Mio.

This time, there wasn’t even a signal for the activation of the skill.

The ones left were me and the Marikosans.

C-Could it be...my opponents are these girls?

Or maybe the owner of the voice, this person called Takane?

Or there’s the possibility that they are just going to leave me alone?

I don’t have the intentions of killing anyone here, so if they are allowing me to regroup with Beren and the others to do some follow-up, that would be best.

“...Am I being left alone?” (Makoto)

“No way. Raidou –no, Misumi Makoto-kun. There’s someone for you too. The Adventurers of Origin are not only comprised of those three, you know? Well then, Invite.” (Takane) Hm?

No, Duel Area?

In an instant, the scenery changes.

The air as well.

Could it be...I alone was thrown out of the labyrinth?!

Is that also allowed?!

“Uwaaa, that’s too much for a joke. What kind of thoughts made you think I am the one most suitable to go against him, Takane-kun... Takane...that damn brat, staying silent huh.”

For now, I ignore the woman that’s fallen prostrated onto the table without looking at me.

Doesn’t seem like she has any intentions of attacking me anyways.

And so, I look around.

It is a room.

A girl’s room.

And it is close to modern Japan.

It is somewhat fancy and pink.

It is a pretty different type from my sisters.

My sister is a cushion maniac room, and my little sister is the simplistic type, or more like, I don’t understand how she decorates.

This type would be...if I remember correctly, the friend of my sister who does wrestling was similar to this. No, the room of that person was worse. Wait, that’s not it, it is not worse...but how to say it...worse? No no, it was cuter than this.

There were things like plush toys, frills, pink, the bed...it was amazing.

Right, it wasn’t horrible, it was amazing.

This is more between the line of normal, or how to say, like a more normal type of cute.

Yeah.

A soft rug that’s normally not seen in this world, and a low table.

It is probably a composition where you sit on the rug without using chairs.

And in reality, I am standing on it and the girl is sitting there prostrated.

If this person is an Adventurer of Origin, there's no point in her age.

But I can't see the age of her appearance and her face either, so I have no idea.

She does look young though.

After a while of muttering, the girl stays silent for a while and lifts her head up slowly.

Ah, young.

Around 20 years old, an outward appearance on the same generation as me.

“Nice to meet you, Makoto-san. I am Hitsuna. You probably already know but, I am one of the Adventurers of Origin. It is not something that needs to be hidden, and since we have met in this way, you probably already know, but I will be saying it, I am the first generation Priestess, even if it wasn't my original intent. Ah, I will bring you tea quickly, so... please take off your shoes and sit.” (Hitsuna) “Ah, don't mind me.” (Makoto)

Hitsuna-san slowly stands up and walks pass by my side without doing anything.

There wasn't a shred of hostility.

Uhm...

For now, I head to the designated place. To the table at the opposite side of where she was sitted, I take off my shoes and sit.

When I try checking the location with Sakai, I learned we are in the same floor.

Great.

The accuracy of the information gain slightly decreasing is a point that

bothers me a bit, but this space itself doesn't bring harm to me.

The thought transmission received.....no response from anyone.

Regarding Tomoe and Mio, I can tell that they are alright.

Since we have been separated, that means she is my opponent?

It is quite different from what I expected.

No, it is completely outside my expectations.

“Or more like, she knew my name as if it were natural. And...she is an Adventurer of Origin and the first generation Priestess huh. The other is... she is shorter than me which is rare to see aside from children.” (Makoto)
This is important.

Excluding children and certain demi-human races, there's few people who are shorter than me with the same age appearance as me.

Just now, Hitsuna-san passed by me and she was only tall enough to reach my chin.

It felt fresh.

“Sorry for the wait. Ara, you are in seiza, what a mannered person. It is okay to relax.” (Hitsuna) Hitsuna-san returns.

In a space of time that didn't feel unnatural.

She places a teacup that is steaming quite a bit in front of me, puts the tray down as well, and sits down.

There's coffee inside.

Ah, now that I think about it, Hitsuna-san's hair color is indigo blue.

Rokuya-san and his group were things like white or silver.

Hm?

“Thanks.” (Makoto)

“...Sorry. The men in our side all love coffee, so I made some out of habit. Did you like tea or black tea more?” (Hitsuya) “No, I also like coffee as well.” (Makoto)

While responding to the words of Hitsuna-san, I noticed.

Adventurer of Origin.

Hearing that, I understood.

However...

“First generation...Priestess?” (Makoto)

“Eh?”

“Uhm, Hitsuna-san, you said you were the first generation Priestess just now, right?” (Makoto) Now that it has gone through my head, it is quite the statement.

When talking about Priestess, she is referring to that one, right?

The one that is currently in the party of Senpai at the present day and is the symbol of Lorel Union.

“Yeah. We had an agreement with Root, and there were a variety of circumstances, so I left that seat not long after, but...I was a Priestess of Lorel Union, its first generation and the foundation of it.” (Hitsuna) ...The Adventurers of Origin really have a lot of talents.

Unexpected developments, meeting people with unexpected titles.

In order to calm down, I take a sip of the coffee.

Hm, it is crazy good.

If this were sold as a specialty product of the labyrinth, it would profit big.

Oops, my merchant part came out.

It is good that I am able to buy time like this, but what should I do from now on.

Seeing that I sipped the coffee, Hitsuna-san smiles as she also drinks of her own teacup.

It has the scent of plum tea.

And so...we have finally reached this point.

The ending of Tsuki ga Michi.

Let's be clear about this, it is not that this is the actual end, it simply means we have caught up with the most up-to-date chapter, and the author hasn't updated for a good while.

So that means, until the author releases a new chapter, this will be a temporal end for Tsuki.

I really want to thank everyone for the support I have received.

I know, I say that all the time, but seriously, no matter how many times I say it, it wouldn't be enough.

At first, I simply wanted to practice my Japanese, so I picked the first Isekai manga I found that had no translation, and it was Tsuki ga Michibiku. Hell, it was a lot harder than expected and extremely taxing, I also noticed my English was terrible (which is something I was actually proud of, lol).

Really, translating takes a lot of hours a day, and I have to say, if it wasn't for you guys and your support, I wouldn't have been able to continue bringing out more chapters. Reading your comments, whether they were about the chapter or not, brought a smile to my face. Even the discussions and negative comments, and the small 'thanks for the chapter!', they really help a lot. So if you like the works of other translators, make sure to thank them. It may not sound like much, but those small things add up.

Once again, thank you for the support. And not to forget the donators and the patrons. Oh boy, I wasn't really expecting them to blow me away. Especially the sponsored chapters. Really, the number of sponsored chapters were stacking up faster than I could juice them out. It mind boggled me.

...

I did say it was the end, but an end simply marks a new beginning.

I will be announcing a new project which you all know I have been searching for. Tons of suggestions were given to me, and I am really

thankful.

In 3 days, I will publish a post announcing what novel it will be. There, I will write about the new format I will be utilizing for that new novel.

I hope a few of you guys stick along on this journey to a new parallel world!

See you guys in the next one!

Chapter 275: The fight progresses with Tomoe's excitement

“Against only three intruders...!!”

“Why are we being restrained to this level?!”

“Or more like, what is the healing party doing?! Isn't their job to do continuous healing?! High Heal, Mana Heal, Cure, and Circle Heal! At any rate, I am counting on you guys until you completely run out of stock!”

“We are already doing our very best here! Or more like, you guys, don't go dull even when we are healing you! Your stamina should be plenty and we should have dealt with all your abnormal status effects!!”

“Our defense skills and enhancements should have been perfect as well, and yet, what unbelievable attack power they have!!”

Picnic Rose Garden is being stirred up.

The defensive battle that they are the most specialized in, and moreover, in their home that's their number one base. On top of that, the opponent's forces have already been split up and they are supposed to be dealing with only three people; those were supposed to be exceptional victory conditions, and yet...

Hmmm, looks like things are going well.

Beren, Hokuto, and Shii are managing things smoothly.

...

It has been a while since I have tasted such nostalgic coffee, and there's the scent of peach tea that I can smell slightly from where I am.

There's coffee in this world as well, but how to say it, this is nostalgic.

That's right, it is like the black canned coffee.

The instant type?

While I was thinking of such pointless things, I was confirming the current state of the battle that I was being shown, and I could tell that a

smile surfaced in my face.

“Noma and Ryoma-san, you two are getting way too agitated... Sivaf, you are stepping way too forward; Clemyu, what are you doing?! Your healing is not making it in time! Aniki-kun is as always too... Geez!”

And Hitsuna who was opposite of me was shouting pointlessly while looking, not at me, but at the picture that is being shot from above the battle.

What was being projected in mid-air, where there's nothing, was a big picture the size of a 58 inches tv.

The first thing that girl did when she sipped her tea once and said 'now then', was this projection.

Since she was going to do something, I matched her magic activation with my own [Brid], but for some reason, it didn't work.

I have tried to stealthily activate it a few times already, but it looks like my magic is not activating.

My Magic Armor is active though...

There are many powers of the Wise that I simply don't understand.

Are the names like Noma and Ryoma part of the members of Picnic Rose Garden?

I don't know who she is retorting to and for what, but if I were to understand what she was retorting to, it might be unexpectedly amusing.

I did try to confirm with [Sakai] just in case, and it seems this is without doubt a live feed.

In this current state where I can't attack Hitsuna-san, I am simply spectating the projection together with her.

By the way, this is not projected here but, Tomoe and Mio are also fighting at different places.

Tomoe is fighting Hakumokuren-san and Ginebia-san; Mio is fighting Rokuya-san.

It is a bit different from planned, but our preparations are properly working.

With how things are going, Beren and the others should have no problems for now.

Then, buying time is the number one job for me.

“!! He was able to take a direct hit of the Asura Fist of Ageha-chan?! Is that big Arke man only a ninja in appearance?!” (Hitsuna)

“No, even if he looks like that, he can properly do tricky moves, you know? See there?” (Makoto)

In a remarkably short amount of time, a terrifying amount of power was condensed in one fist; this deadly attack that was fitting to be called a finisher move was aiming at Shii.

Even as a Forest Oni, contrary to her small physique, she is a power-fighter, but I do think it would have been bad if she were to take a direct hit from that attack.

But Shii jumped and avoided the fist, and in substitute, the one who got the brunt of the attack was the Arke, Hokuto, who had slipped in between those two.

The attack was already not going to reach Shii, but Hokuto probably thought of doing this in case there was a follow-up attack from the other party.

Using his elbow that was heavily protected by armor, he took on the attack of the female physical combatant that’s apparently called Ageha.

Thinking about it normally, this should have hurt quite a lot, but she didn’t show any signs of faltering, and was showering Hokuto with a barrage of attacks as she rotates.

What scary strength of mind.

Of course, her physical strength is also unbelievable.

“Eh?”

Hitsuna reacts to my words and looks at me.

Hokuto receives the barrage of Ageha, deflects them, avoids them, and controls the moves of Shii who had 'escaped' into the air.

Thread.

With the visage of saving Shii while in the middle of the air, Hokuto had attached a strong string on her.

Shii, who had escaped into the air, was evading the follow-up attacks that were raining down upon her with unbelievable movements, and brandished her metal rod.

It made a sudden acceleration as it was swung down, and this attack filled with brute force was smashed at an area where people were gathered.

Hokuto and Shii; a combination attack that was done with great coordination.

While taking out new equipment one after the other, Beren was parrying the light-armored warriors specialized in speed and crushes them; that figure of his was also splendid.

...No, instead of calling those guys light-armored warriors, they are more like assassins that possess high-dexterity and fire power.

The word raiders really does fit them well.

The support from the backline is also superb.

Right now, Beren is utilizing the treasured weapons of the Eldwas without any frugality and, not only arrows, even throwing weapons are mostly ineffective, and the opponents that are fighting him head on are most likely more inclined into evasion than defense, they are continuously receiving attacks from the blunt weapon of Beren that has a crazy accuracy endowed in it.

It is a development that is incredibly compatible with Beren.

Utilizing his weapons to its maximum capability, he is turning the battle into his favor.

This is a development that was most likely brought by specially because he is a dwarf.

Even so, nullifying the long ranged attacks and his accuracy rate; both of those things are fields that the Elder Dwarfs put their efforts in after seeing me.

In other words, Beren still has more of those kind of equipment in his ring.

I began pitying the enemies in a variety of meanings, but in a sense, this also means I can be at ease.

“Haaah... they are strong. But even so, this is strange. No matter how you see it, the healing is too slow. Could it be that you guys did something? But doing something as dangerous as inhibiting healing magic which would hinder you guys as well would just be too unbelievable...” (Hitsuna)

“ ... ”

Yeah, if they still think in that way, it is still okay.

Instead of asking me directly, she is giving the atmosphere of a spectator that's muttering her own impressions to herself as she watches the battle.

If healing magic is completely unusable, depending on how the fight goes, the chances of deaths appearing would be incredibly high.

If we did that, we would putting the cart before the horse. It goes against our objective.

Or more like, my current situation is weird too.

I have never had my magic sealed before.

Now that I think about it, in my parallel world life, I have never been afflicted with abnormal status effects.

But it is certain that I can't release magic against the woman that's in front of me. My spell is not activating.

I can manipulate my Magic Armor like normal, and I can use my [Sakai] too though.

It kind of feels...unpleasant.

What to do here.

Tomoe and Mio are still in the middle of battle.

I can't tell if they are playing around, or if the enemy is actually strong; even this, I should have been able to tell, and yet, my thought transmission is not working either.

It might even be possible that Tomoe and Mio are in a state where they can't sense me.

We are the ones that want to buy time, and we are currently able to smoothly do exactly that, but...as expected, this is unpleasant.

"Uhm, Hitsuna-san, may I have a word with you?" (Makoto)

Even if it doesn't work, I still try to throw a straight ball.

"What is it, Makoto-kun?" (Hitsuna)

"For a while now, I haven't been able to activate magic. Are you doing something?" (Makoto)

At the very least, something that's not magic.

It is probably something that is the same as my [Sakai], a special skill that only people that came from Japan can utilize.

But at this rate, the only option I have is to bring this into a physical battle.

That might actually be the right option though.

I have been relying on [Sakai] for a lot until now, but seriously, abilities that can't be detected are really useful.

...That's why, now that I am experiencing it myself, I can tell how tough it is.

"That's right. Takane-kun told me that pinning down your casting is one of the things I should do. You are right now in a safety zone I created. Fighting against you in magic would be way too much for me after all."
(Hitsuna)

Takane huh.

The owner of that voice just now.

Must be the administrator of this labyrinth.

“Safety zone huh.” (Makoto)

“That’s right. Whether it is magic or physical, this domain won’t allow any kind of attacks to others. That’s my special ability.” (Hitsuna)

“...I feel like that’s an incredibly unfair ability though.” (Makoto)

An invincible space.

The kind that forcefully turns a fight into a draw?

How fiendish.

“At a glance, yeah. The limitations are quite a lot, so it is hard to utilize. It was by chance that this time I was able to properly set it up. That’s how it is, so let’s spectate together and take it easy. Oh?! Bia and Haku are going for it!” (Hitsuna)

...

Bia and Haku...

Tomoe’s place!

No, wait, that place looks like it is going plenty well.

More importantly...the limitations are many?

It is hard to utilize?

Just hearing that she can create a domain that doesn’t allow any attacks makes me view it as an incredibly good skill.

But it seems there’s holes in it.

Should I try concentrating with [Sakai] to investigate it?

At any rate! Staying like this is out of the question.

While I act as if I am watching the projected image of Tomoe that had appeared in the room, I began investigating the full details of this so called

Safety Zone.

Placing the burden on everyone...is not amusing for me.

I will definitely do something about this, so, just for a bit longer, I am counting on you guys.

“Gu...nu?!”

“Dancing Bow, Septentrion! Fo-llo-wing! Mirror image, Basilisk Lance!!”

The moment Tomoe showed slight signs of placing strength in her legs to close the distance...Hakumokuren, who carried a large-sized bow on her back, made a graceful dance at the same time as she flickers the whip at her right hand.

In an instant, seven arrows appear in mid-air right in front of her, came in contact with her whip, and were shot in a straight line towards Tomoe.

With her long sword and activation of a barrier, Tomoe cuts the arrows at a terrifying speed and receives them. The arrows of this dancer that she had received, were fast and heavy, and most of all, sharp.

Tomoe had deemed Hakumokuren's bow skills as the highest level of a true marksman.

Tomoe was honestly underestimating the skills that the adventurers use, but the skills that Hakumokuren utilizes and her ability with the bow she was showing was by no means something to be underestimated. Her power and coordination was visibly high class.

“Tch, the next one you are using your bow huh. Seriously, what a skilfull one you are-ja no!” (Tomoe)

The distance between them stayed as it was, and in the small space of time that was created from Tomoe deflecting those seven continuous attacks, Hakumokuren had already taken a stance with the bow that was at her back and shot with it.

But an arrow didn't come from her front.

The time it took for Tomoe to open her eyes wide and begin to move probably didn't even take a second, and yet, it couldn't be called a fast reaction.

A heavy arrow approaches from her back.

The barrier that was deployed had been pierced, and while clicking her tongue in her mind, Tomoe unsheathes the short sword with her open left hand and cuts down the approaching arrow.

“What?! Ugh!!” (Tomoe)

Those body movements and reaction time used to intercept the attack were on a terrifying level.

Even so, as if the intercepted arrow was some sort of signal, a second arrow with the same trajectory that was surely not there a second ago was approaching Tomoe.

There was already no way to deal with it.

The right arm of Tomoe that had the longsword in hand had an arrow pierce through it.

At the same time, weakening and petrifying effects were assailing her.

With a single breath, Tomoe blew away those two status effects with plain fighting spirit.

“You have done it now... You... ouch!” (Tomoe)

“No matter how strong you are, lowering your guard can cost you your life, you know! [Ultimate Rotation], [Holy Light Dance]!” (Ginebia)

A terrifying amount of magic power was gathered in those fists of the priest that looked as if just touching that light would turn you into dust.

Ginebia had closed the distance between herself and Tomoe on her own, and laughs fearlessly at point blank range.

This was already not even in the range of a katana anymore.

Then, in what range is it? Fists.

It was the space for fists.

Tomoe was completely caught by surprise, and this one moment that was provided to Ginebia allowed her to step into her finishing move.

(This is bad. This sensation is just like Waka's—!!) (Tomoe)

The moment the woman that was wearing priest garbs stepped forward, chills ran through the spine of Tomoe and made her body shudder.

Nostalgia and fear; the pain she felt in first meeting she had with her master had resurfaced in her mind.

The light fists approach her.

Where should she guard?

With that dazzling light that even made it hard to see where the attack was coming from, her vision was blocked completely.

Tomoe reflexively guards her head, and then...she felt a dull and heavy attack from her abdomen.

“Guuuuh! Damn it!!!” (Tomoe)

“If it were done with just one attack, it wouldn't be called ultimate rotation!” (Ginebia)

“Nuuu?! Guuuuh!!” (Tomoe)

With the momentum of that attack, a storm of punches that came from left and right coupled with centrifugal force had enveloped Tomoe.

The moment the violent sounds of light explosions and blunt hits had stopped, Tomoe was blown off to the far back, and laid down on the ground face up.

After finishing a deep breath, Ginebia returns to where her partner is.

“Hm, good job, Bia.” (Haku)

“It has been awhile since I have done such a wild dance. Aah, I have shown a sight that shouldn't be shown as a priest~~.” (Ginebia)

“How about just considering yourself a fist monk? I feel like Bia's Holy Cross-type skills are different to normal, in a variety of meanings.” (Haku)

“Why?! Increase the power of your holy element with prayers and release an attack that makes the enemy withdraw. Isn’t that exactly what mine is as well?!” (Ginebia)

“The base of it is the only thing that’s barely similar. Well, this must be what’s called ‘the mysteries of words’.” (Haku)

“Just to warn you but, this is totally not over yet, okay?! Don’t lower your guard, got it?” (Ginebia)

With a dissatisfied expression, Ginebia orders Hakumokuren to confirm the situation of the battle.

“I know. If this were a simple Superior Dragon, after that full hit, what would be left to do is gather the corpse, but...the opponent is a Superior Dragon that has made a pact with a japanese person and has changed her original form. As long as it didn’t leave her with no damage, it is good. This is truly tiresome...” (Hakumokuren)

“Yeah.” (Ginebia)

The two of them respectively left a skill and spell in standby, and both continue to warily watch Tomoe who is bend down.

“...Well well, this is a sensation I haven’t felt in a long while-ja yo. Spilling blood I wasn’t planning on spilling. In normal circumstances, that splendid skill and magic combination would warrant a handshake from me. Ah, right-ja. This is...how it felt to fight against an enemy.” (Tomoe)

“.....”

Tomoe spoke, stood on her knee, brushed off the dust on her clothes, and stood back up.

She picks up the short sword she let go when she fell, slowly sheathes it back, and hits her back with the longsword that she didn’t let go of.

Using her left hand to grab the arrow that pierced her upper arm, it soon turned into mist and disappeared.

At the same time, her wound also closes.

Spitting out the accumulated blood inside her mouth, the body that

should have received quite the amount of blows was not showing a single scratch.

And then, in place of that, there was one trait that was clearly different from before; what had appeared in the face of Tomoe -those eyes of hers.

They looked like those of a reptile, but it had something completely different from it; eyes that released overwhelming power.

Eyes that only the monarchs of illusory beasts possess –no, it went further above that, eyes that only a few handful possess; those eyes were releasing absolute nobility and despair to its surroundings.

“Uwa, dragon eyes. Finally entering battle mode huh. This surpasses the usual dragon roar.” (Haku)

Hakumokuren analyzed the effects that those eyes were manifesting.

Her expression was not showing as much leisure as her manner of speaking.

“In other words, it is that? Like when Frieza-sama transformed?”
(Ginebia) <[*queue frieza theme: only a chilling elegy*](#)>

“...Maybe she has only come down from her pod?” (Haku)

“Then, we should give up on a frontal attack. From now on, it will be the time for deception and gambles. How about that, Haku?” (Ginebia)

“I’m in.” (Haku)

Ginebia and Haku had sweat flowing down their face. Doing frivolous talk that only both of them as japanese would understand, they gulp down.

“I acknowledge it.” (Tomoe)

“?”

“Hakumokuren and Ginebia; I acknowledge both of your strengths. I acknowledge you as strong. You didn’t stand before me with foolish confidence, and are actually people that have fitting strength and experience to stand before me.” (Tomoe)

“ ”

The tone of Tomoe was low and...cold...it had changed into a freezing one.

Her words were praising her opponents, and yet, that voice that was reaching the ears of those two contained an abnormal amount of pressure.

“I have shed the blood that Waka didn’t wish us to shed.” (Tomoe)

Even when she is in a half-body stance, she doesn’t prepare her katana and artlessly held it in her hand.

It was clearly a different stance from the swordsmen that these girls have fought against.

“This silver hair, which was the proof of being given further power, has rubbed onto blood...and has been tainted.” (Tomoe)

When she touched her hair with her free hand, sand falls down.

Right now, Tomoe is in the boosted state where Makoto provided her power.

Her hair color being silver instead of blue was proof of it.

“Fufu, good grief. If I lower my guard for a little bit, a sense of almightyness fills my body. I have to get used to it a bit more or this will continue being something that would be wasted on me-ja no. Getting haughty so easily and ending up like this right off the bat, seriously pathetic.” (Tomoe)

Slight complaints towards her master were mixed in her wry smile, but blowing away those emotions in an instant, those eyes of hers were directed at the girls that were standing at her front without lowering their guards.

“But even with that! Even if we have given you everything, even the location advantage! No matter if the chance of the victory we are looking for is sliding on thin ice! This disgrace can’t be forgiven!

This anger is probably in part directed at myself!! You don’t mind if I repay you for that, right?!” (Tomoe)

Along with the words that were spilled out one after the other, magic

power was released as if striking onto them.

Several types of spells were instantly casted, and for the two adventurers that have lengthy experience, that activation was unknown for them.

Tomoe had voiced out her own disadvantage, but those were also things that could be said about Ginebia and Haku.

For them as adventurers to fight against an opponent that they are facing for the first time, knowing full well that that person was clearly stronger, and being unable to escape from it; that in itself was an impossible task for them akin to telling them to die.

The original job of adventurers is to survive and bring back information of the opponent, so no matter how many advantages they are given, there are existences that they should avoid fighting against.

For example; an unknown existence that far surpasses a Superior Dragon.

“Fuuh...from here on, we will harden our defenses and aim for a counter...” (Haku)

“And then, bring it to a battle of attrition. I know, Haku. Leave the support to me. I am counting on you for the fire power and distraction.” (Ginebia)

“There’s no yes or no in this. When we overcome this, the sake we will drink today will definitely taste exquisite!” (Haku)

Ginebia and Haku took their battle stances with all their resolve in it.

Even when receiving the pressure that surpassed the roar of a dragon, they still managed to take a stance.

This told how much experience these two had as adventurers and their high ability.

“Well then...” (Tomoe)

Tomoe points the tip of her katana, that was clad in a faint blue light, to the two and mutters.

Hakumokuren prepared her whip, Ginebia her glove; both of them exchanging sharp gazes with Tomoe.

Tomoe laughs daringly, and Haku and Ginebia both nod at the same time.

“Begin!!”

With the spirit of both sides blasting, the signal to resume the battle was shouted, and spells and skills were released in an instant.

The conclusion was close; that’s the kind of feeling that was being keenly transmitted from this spectacle.

The fight between the other follower of Makoto and the assassin was also about to reach its conclusion.

Chapter 276: Mio's Weakness

Mio's attack cuts through the air.

It didn't hit again.

Suppressing his presence is probably the special ability of Rokuya and some sort of job skill in the assassin category.

(He is good to a bothersome level-desu wa. I have never seen a more perfected hit-and-run that utilizes evasion and blind spots this well.)

(Mio) With another sigh she has been doing for who knows how many times already, Mio is impressed by the technique of Rokuya who she is fighting against.

At times, she would catch his presence or she catch his figure with her eyes, but her attacks end up being avoided like just now.

And yet, opposite to this, Rokuya has been dealing powerful attacks to her from every direction.

At core, Mio does not place importance in defense and evasion.

Or more like, she doesn't need to do it.

And so, the strategy of hit-and-run of Rokuya fits perfectly in a bad way for her.

But...

(Well, the damage that I am receiving is slower compared to the speed I am recovering at, so there's no point though. What's strange is that there's no way this rude and outspoken man wouldn't notice.) (Mio) Mio had shot a serious spell at first, but after that, she has been dealing with Rokuya without being serious anymore.

It is true that he is a problematic opponent to hit attacks at, but once one attack actually connects, the match will be completely decided, is how she thinks.

There's most likely not even a 1% chance of Mio's attacks hitting Rokuya.

But Mio doesn't think of that percentage as small.

She understands that there's no need to be in a hurry.

As long as it is not going against the instructions of Makoto, it is fine to do as she always does.

And then, after dulling the movements of Rokuya, she will give him a lesson.

Since he is immortal, it shouldn't be a problem if she were to release her restrain a little bit.

Mio was thinking in this way.

It looks as if she is calm...and angry.

In other words, the same old Mio. She is operating as normal.

"Shadow stroll, [Skywalk]; domain of Gods [Chronos Filing]." (Rokuya)
(That's most likely the skill that makes it almost impossible to grasp his presence. The other is probably something that increases the reaction speed of his body.) (Mio) Rokuya showed up in a slightly faraway location, and then, when he utilized his skill again, his figure disappears again and Mio is unable to catch his presence anymore.

From there, he uses enhanced skills and attacks in conjunction. This is a pattern that has been repeated countless times already.

Shortly thereafter, the presence of Rokuya is caught in the perception of Mio. A bit fast.

Mio continues sighing as she shoots a darkness bullet.

"[Counter Death Scythe]!" (Rokuya)

(As I thought. Eh?) (Mio)

"Fang that destroys the soul, [Soul Slaughter]!" (Rokuya)

It didn't end with only the pattern that has been repeated countless times. When Mio showed an opening from her weariness, Rokuya closed the distance and hit her with the katar that had a dark purple blade.

The strongest attack until now had hit the side of Mio.

At the same time, a miasma that invites death spreads into her body and

was eating away the magic power that was clad on Mio as well.

Mio has defeated several assassins already, but this attack is a first for her.

“Without taking your time in the attack that connected, you once again disappear. And it was quite the brutal technique.” (Mio) Mio perceived something with her instinct and reflexively clampers up.

Right after, from her right shoulder she placed to cover up her right side, the same attack was dealt.

When she looks at that place, she could see Rokuya there.

She could see him, but there was not a single trace of his presence.

Even though she could see him, he wasn't there.

A strange sensation was transmitted to Mio.

“[Enchant Poison, Ghoul Witch], [Enhance, Ogre]” (Rokuya)

“!!”

In that instant that felt as if it was a ‘oh crap’ moment, and the instant that felt as if she had been perplexed by a strange sensation, Mio, who had noticed the pattern of her opponent and saw Rokuya preparing his katars by crossing them together...smiled.

“Then...the equality of 4,000 lives turned to dust, [Wind of Destruction]” (Rokuya) The figure of the assassin disappeared, and in place of that, a black mist passed by Mio.

“Finally brought it out. A combo attack and your trump card huh.” (Mio) Several thousands of deadly attacks were assaulting the body of Mio.

And yet, Mio had received that attack without breaking that smile from her face and didn't show any care about her kimono that was being steadily torn off.

“...After receiving that, this is your impression of it? Well well, you are far stronger than I expected.” (Rokuya) Rokuya had returned to his usual atmosphere he had when he first met Makoto's group and spoke.

Mio's knees fell to the ground, but the blade storm didn't allow her to fall down, and yet, he spoke in such a calm manner. In a sense, this manner of act was scary in itself.

“...”

As expected, there was no response from Mio.

“This attack is the one with the strongest power I currently have at hand. If you were to come to our territory and had twice the power I had assumed you had, this should have been plenty enough to deal with you guys, but as expected, it just won't go as planned huh.” (Rokuya) ‘Good grief’ is what Rokuya says as he holds his head with his hand and shrugs his shoulders.

Utilizing skills continuously, moving continuously, and attacking continuously; there's no way he wouldn't get tired.

That's also one of the reasons why Mio is not growing impatient.

Because she understood that the one who will be running out of stamina first will be the opponent.

And then...the storm stops.

He thought that she would fall, but Mio simply stood up like nothing and patted her body from up to down.

“!!!”

A black kimono instantly covered the body of Mio.

There was not a single trace of a cut, and there were no signs of the skin color change caused by poison.

It was all like when she first got teleported to this place.

The shock of Rokuya couldn't be helped.

“...Even if you catch me by surprise, even if you shower me with attacks, even if you hit me with a finishing move; your attacks won't reach me.” (Mio) “They were reaching...is what I thought though...” (Rokuya)

“Those splendid katars of yours, or more like, your blades in general and

the several types of poisons you used won't leave a single wound in my body." (Mio) "...It is just as you say." (Rokuya)

"The compatibility is good, don't you think? Is the confidence of that big mouth of yours still remaining?" (Mio) The words of Mio continue on.

That's right.

From the very beginning, Mio had the intentions of watching all that Rokuya had to bring out.

She had decided that she would receive them all and laugh at him.

And after that, she would punish him.

With the carefully selected lineup of punishments she has repeated against Shiki and the small number of rude ones at Asora.

Going into details, it would be: scouring, mopping, rotary cutting, and pocky; those ones are settled, and any others are added on her whim.

That's how Mio's plan goes.

"...Yeah, that hasn't changed. From within that group, you were the one I was the most compatible against. Today, with these conditions, I have confidence that I will definitely not lose." (Rokuya) "What did you say?" (Mio)

Mio reflexively asked back.

The eyes of Rokuya did show fatigue, but there was no despair.

Even though he had shown his trump card, he didn't show any signs of giving up.

"After fighting you, my instincts whispered to me that maybe your objective was buying time, you see. And so, I thought that instead of the objective planned at first, it would be better to defeat the Calamity Spider." (Rokuya) "..."

How displeasing, is what Mio straightly felt from this.

Just like Rokuya said, this battle has way too many advantages on one side. Even so, there's no doubt the strong ones here are Mio, Tomoe, and

Makoto.

And yet, this old adventurer standing in front of her was not trying to oppose her, but defeat her.

This isn't something that Mio could forgive.

"But, even when I tried to analyze the many battles going around while attacking you, I was unable to grasp any decisive conclusion. The former Superior Dragon, Tomoe-dono, having a tough fight, and on the contrary, the group of that dwarf is proceeding with the battle predominantly; both of those things were out of my expectations, and those are indeed key factors, but it definitely doesn't show what's on the other side of the door." (Rokuya) "...That's why, even if you had to take the method that required time, you were thinking of defeating me first and then join in the information gathering yourself." (Mio) "Yeah, that's how it would be. Or more like, it has already been done." (Rokuya) "Are you...referring to the poisons that are combining inside of me? If that's what you mean, that's quite the overly optimistic preparation you had." (Mio) "By no means. The poison was just a decoy. The weakness I am sure you have is not related to poison. Or rather, poison wouldn't work on you at all. In the first place, for a long time...the Calamity Spider has had no weaknesses." (Rokuya) Rokuya lifted both of his hands as if stating his surrender.

If someone is able to obtain a piece of the hard carapace, thread, fangs, claws, or poison of the Calamity Spider, they would be able to buy a house with it.

All of them are high grade ingredients, and at the same time, they are the proof that the Calamity Spider has conquered all the weaknesses a spider mamono has.

The Calamity Spider has no weaknesses.

Until now, there hasn't been a single one who has been able to defeat it.

It is exactly because Rokuya has been in the know of the bad news that the Calamity Spider has brought about for longer than the normal adventurers that he is able to understand this fact to his very core.

“ ... ”

“But, right now, you are Mio. Not a spider.” (Rokuya)

“What are you trying to say? Yo–Eh?!” (Mio)

“Your footing was neglected. Was it because you didn’t think of my attacks as a threat? Or maybe because you thought that combo attack was my trump card? Or it might be because you lowered your guard with the combining poisons? Whatever the case, you noticed way too late.” (Rokuya) The state of affairs were affirming the words of Rokuya.

The footing of Mio was producing a faint light and several gears restrained the body of Mio.

Unknown if this was real or an illusion, it looked like some of those gears had melded with the body of Mio, and at times, they would make some sort of rough noise.

The gears that didn’t even reach ten, began to slowly rotate, and it seems that that movement was proving painful for her, her expression distorts into anguish.

Legs, arms, waist, shoulders, neck, chest...

Gears were enfolded around every part of Mio’s body.

This is the true trump card Rokuya aimed at Mio.

“This is...a type of restraining barrier huh. Moreover, it even generously adds pain! I don’t think this is the kind of skill an assassin would use, but no matter how powerful it is, to think you would use something like a barrier as a trump card against me.” (Mio) “Just as you have guessed, this is not a skill from my guild or my job; it is an ability that only I can use in this world. Gears of fantasy, [Grim Tale Gear].” (Rokuya) “Grim Tale?! I don’t care about the name. If this is your trump card, I will tear it down into pieces–!!” (Mio) “No, you should listen. This ability can only be used on certain people of power, and as an assassin, it possesses an incredibly powerful effect.” (Rokuya) “...It is true that this is something that even super specialized magicians wouldn’t be able to reach in their lifetime! Leaving aside if this would effective against me though!” (Mio) Mio

responded to the words of Rokuya, but wasn't complying to them.

The rotation of the gears was slowly but surely becoming slower.

It is also beginning to create creaking ear-piercing sounds.

This is proof that the barrier was clearly about to be destroyed.

"Therefore, there's a particular restriction to those restrains." (Rokuya)
"Res...triction?" (Mio)

"If there's someone who destroys this restrains with their own strength, the fantasy gears will provide a blessing." (Rokuya) "Fufufufu! What's with that?! There's nothing good for you! Using a power that's too much for you; rather than calling it a restriction, it is more of a price!" (Mio)
"That's right. It restrains the target physically and magically, and will slowly lead them to their death. The only way to get out of it would be to destroy all the gears while in a state of having your power restrained in all senses. It is a power that's wasted on me." (Rokuya) "No matter how great it is, it is just a matter of time before it is destroyed! If this is all you have, it is time for your punishment, Rokuya. I won't let you escape." (Mio) "You are truly scary. If you are able to destroy this, you will be released from all your

bindings and be free." (Rokuya)

"I see, that's great to hear! After all, I will be able to teach you your own posi-- All the...bindings?" (Mio) The words of Mio suddenly lose their heat.

It seems she noticed something.

Rokuya has already noticed.

No, his aim was that from the very beginning.

The weak point of, not the spider, but Mio... that is...

"All your bindings. Any kind of pact, restrain, restriction; all your bindings will be destroyed along with the fantasy gears." (Rokuya) "... Rokuya...you!!!" (Mio)

"Of course, it would be the same if you just have them bound again later.

But, can you really throw that away with your own hands? The pact that is your bond between you and Makoto. The pact that led to being given the name Mio. The pact that was most likely the first one you have formed in your life.” (Rokuya) “Fuh...!! Fuuuh...!!” (Mio)

“...It is true that Makoto-kun, who you treasure more than anything, is stronger than you. We wouldn’t be able to take him as hostage, and depending on the situation, he might even be more of a problem than you. We wouldn’t be able to use this kind of method as a weakness. But you... your love for Makoto-kun is excessive. To the point that you wouldn’t throw away a single thing he has given to you even if it cost you your life. That’s how much you love him. That’s a weak point. You can’t do something like throwing away the pact you have with him with your own hands. At the very least, at present, you can’t.” (Rokuya) “!!!! !!!”

She increased the strength, but, showing an expression as if fearing the creaking sounds of the gears, she decreased her strength, and accepts the pain.

“Well then, stay like that for a while please. I will be going.” (Rokuya) “... Quite...impressive. To think you had set up such a threat, I wouldn’t have expected it at all. But, even if I have given up on fighting back...these gears can’t kill me, you know? It only hurts a little.” (Mio) “Having you stay there obediently is plenty enough.” (Rokuya)

“And also, Rokuya, I won’t let you go anywhere. The first spell I shot, do you know what it was?” (Mio) “The first spell you shot? Ah, the one you used to catch me?” (Rokuya) “No-desu wa. In a radius of around 300 meters, I made it so noooo one can leave. If it’s Waka-sama and Tomoe-san, they would be able to leave in given time but, I wonder if you would be able to accomplish that?” (Mio) “?!”

Rokuya opens his eyes wide.

“At any rate, it would be troublesome if you were to escape, so only that one spell, I placed serious power when activating it. The effective time of this ability is not eternal, right? It is a powerful ability after all. If the gears disappear naturally...let’s go for a round 2. I won’t lose next time. The

punishment is still on hold, okay? Ufufufufufufu~~~.” (Mio) “Tch! A draw was one of the worst developments within the possible scenarios! At the very least, I have to silence the group of that dwarf!” (Rokuya) Glancing at the unmoving Mio for a second, Rokuya’s figure disappears.

Only the small laugh filled with anger of Mio remained in that place, and Rokuya was unable to get out from the space that Mio had setup there.

Mio was unable to move because of the gears’ restrain; Rokuya was sprinting at full speed in search for a seam in Mio’s spell.

In this space where the battle had finished, there’s currently no deaths.

*

“Ah, so that’s how it is.”

“...You are interested in the battle between Rokuya-san and Mio-san? Sorry, I can’t show you due to Rokuya-san’s request.” (Hitsuna) “Eh?”

“Ara, did I misinterpret that?” (Hitsuna)

“This is your territory anyways. Well, I understand that there’s a lot going on on your side. What I got just now.....was your power, Hitsuna-san.” (Makoto) “?!”

“You called it ‘Safety Zone’, right? You said so before but, it is certainly not an invincible space.” (Makoto) ...It is just slight but, I felt the emotions of rage from Mio.

It is a situation I didn’t expect.

Even so, in order to change the situation, I have to do something about this space first.

The analysis of it...is probably finished.

“Cutting off the attacks from the outside, and also deploying a space that prohibits fights inside. I see, it does sound like a power in an MMO. The condition for its activation is not a catalyst, but time.” (Makoto) “...”

“It seems like this is the type that is tough on its effective time and

cooldown time.” (Makoto) “And Makoto-kun has an ability that can analyze our abilities? This might be out of expectations.” (Hitsuna) “So, it looks like you can’t shorten the effective time from inside, but judging from its composition, I thought that maybe attacks from outside would manage to reduce the effective time.” (Makoto) “!!”

The expression of Hitsuna changes.

If that expression was translated into words, it would be: ‘yeah, that’s right’.

Looks like she is the type that can’t hide things.

I feel like we can be friends.

I feel like we can do some relaxing trades.

“Uhm, Makoto-kun? Where did that mass of magic power, that was coming out from you, go?” (Hitsuna) “Ah, are you talking about the thing I can bring out whenever I want?” (Makoto) In the time she was completely concentrated in the amazing combination attack of the two adventurers against Tomoe, I utilized a blind spot she wouldn’t have been able to notice unless she stood up.

“Yeah yeah, that.” (Hitsuna)

“I was wondering if I could let it out from the Safety Zone, you see. So I stretched it a bit.” (Makoto) “What did you say?!” (Hitsuna)

“And...you know...” (Makoto)

“ ... ”

Hitsuna gulps.

But the answer had no mercy.

“I managed to let it out.” (Makoto)

It seems I myself can’t get out, but the Magic Armor was able to leave by squeezing through a part of the Safety Zone that was relatively far from me.

“Geh?! ” (Hitsuna)

“And so, I will be taking my leave now.” (Makoto)

If possible, after assisting Tomoe and Mio, I would like to help out Beren and the others too.

By that time, we should be able to move the situation heavily.

We will achieve our objective while protecting everyone.

It is about time I make my move as well.

Chapter 277: Yarn, Crimson Lotus, and Asora Weapon

A big man that surpasses 2 meters in height.

Being covered by an armor of bursting muscle, he possesses defensive power and endurance that matches his physical appearance. But even when his appearance clearly tells that he is the frontline type, he also specializes in accurate and skillful support.

So unfair.

They are probably using some sort of method to dampen the healing magic greatly, in this current situation where the recovery of the injured is quite slow, the number of enemies has not decreased at all.

Three demi-humans.

Only three.

Even in this overwhelmingly advantageous situation that is fighting in their territory.

They haven't gotten haughty or anything, they are fighting to their best.

While being irritated by this, the captain of Picnic Rose Garden, Vivi, silently continues moving in hiding.

(Ageha and I will defeat that Arke man. Well, I say that, but that Arke called Hokuto is already different from the Arkes that we know. So this is what happens when those things get intelligence huh. Such a pain.) (Vivi)

It was already self-evident that he was an opponent that you would normally avoid battle with.

An organization that has enough war potential to attack their base, and even with overwhelming numbers advantage, there's still no knowing if they can win.

And that organization is a company. This is seriously a funny joke.

But for Vivi, there were no signs of the word armistice popping in her

head.

Even if her prided mercenary group is having an unexpected tough fight, there's still cards remaining.

Also, the present leader of Picnic Rose Garden, Vivi Poze, is a deeply emotional person.

It is both a strong point and a weak point though. At any rate, anyone that she considers a comrade of hers, she takes care of them kindly.

Even if they are against an enemy that possesses mighty power that would defeat them in many scenarios, they are the guys that hurt Pione deeply.

And they are the guys that killed all the friends that Pione cried and was ready to lay down her life to save.

In the eyes of Vivi, Pione is family.

It doesn't go as far as seeing her friends as family, but even so, they are acquaintances that were taking shelter in their base for a period of time.

(I know plenty well that revenge doesn't bring forth anything good. But I also know plenty well that there are people that can't move forward without having any sort conclusion to it, not everyone can just forget. If it's for the sake of seeing Pione smile cheerfully once again, this leader of yours, Vivi-san, will be doing her best.) (Vivi)

Probing on the mysterious item lineup that the dwarf was drawing out, and, on top of that, deciding the coordination between one of her partners Ageha by eye contact, Vivi erases her own figure from sight, and finally caught the back of Hokuto.

The stealth skill training of Rokuya was showing its full colors here.

It is not as precise as the person himself, but the usefulness is incredibly high.

And to prove this, Vivi has been cautiously observing Hokuto, Shii, and Beren, and she is confident that they haven't noticed her.

In other words, it is the time to attack.

She has also received contact from the Marikosans that they have already finished their first job and were going to reconvene with them in a few minutes.

They planned on going to help those girls since they were in the most problematic side of the battlefield, and yet, it ended up with those girls coming to help them which made Vivi slightly mortified, but it is true that their enemies are strong.

She should just be happy about the reinforcement.

(Here it is!) (Vivi)

From the direction she was notified beforehand, she detects a volley of light spears, and decides that she will be moving right after that attack impacts.

She is currently in the place where that bombardment will be landing, but, maybe she has confidence in avoiding them all, she didn't show any signs of running away.

"Beren! Hokuto-chi! An attack with light element and a bit of earth element, incoming! The power is above average! Numbers...a lot!" (Shii)

(The Forest Oni, Shii, has already—?!) (Vivi)

"I have already noticed it too. No need to tell us the direction, Shii!" (Hokuto)

"Understood! I mean, roger!" (Shii)

A notification came from Shii, who was fighting in the sky with the thread of Hokuto and her own flying spell.

She perceived the attack almost at the same time it was released, and she let the two below her know.

"Beren, can I leave it to you?" (Hokuto)

"Of course! I have already somewhat understood the strength of this place, you see! It can be mostly blocked by the Aegis Film, but might as well just give them a blast!" (Beren)

In this battlefield where the tension has increased quite a lot, the dwarf Beren responds to the words of the Arke.

The magic attack of the Marikosans is a powerful attack that wouldn't fall behind the death traps of the dungeon's lower levels.

It would be another story if they knew of it beforehand and had prepared a countermeasure for it, but it is not an attack that you would be able to deal with right after seeing.

At the very least, not in the common sense of Picnic Rose Garden.

“Here we go! Bring back Shii here just in case! First of all, [Catapult]!”
(Beren)

With the words of Beren, apparatusses that were not that big appeared at both of his sides.

Alarms inside the head of Vivi begin to ring when she sees those things she hasn't seen before within the mysterious items he brought out.

(They look similar to ballistas, but it is slightly different. What is he planning on doing?) (Vivi)

Her uneasiness grows increasingly.

But she can't change her plan too drastically at this point in time.

“Prepare, Blast Spears!” (Beren)

What was summoned now are spears.

In the middle of the handle of the spear, there's a strange mechanism. This is also a weapon Vivi has seen for the first time.

4 spears like the ones used in ballistas.

“Hmph...the attack power and scope...Umu, in that case, the angle would be...next, just have to adjust it, and...” (Beren)

Beren, who has equipped some tough-looking goggles, was muttering something, and then, as if abiding to his words, the 4 apparatusses begin to move.

“Shoot!”

(?!)

The 4 spears were pointed towards the mass of light in the sky -no, the wall of light-and were shot.

The spears and the light made contact, and an intense flash covers a whole area.

And in that moment, a weak vibration resembling an earthquake reverberated in the space.

“So it didn’t take all of them out huh! Well, this next one is something that was created by tinkering with a product the humans manufactured. [Aegis Film]!” (Beren)

(Tch, not a single one is falling! I can’t confirm by sight, but it was blocked! In that case...!!) (Vivi)

A flash and vibrations, even so, Vivi, who had accurately calculated the countdown for the impact, immediately understands that the support fire had shown no effectiveness.

But it can create a blank space where attack and defense are gone temporarily.

In the time they are relieved they were able to block the danger of several hundreds of spells, Vivi will move.

Surprise attacks, assassinations, finishing moves; all of those are her repertoire.

No matter how cornered they are, she is a person that shows incredibly high ability.

“History of the Asura Empire, [99 thorns]!!” (Vivi)

“?!! This is...!” (Hokuto)

Hokuto reflexively takes a defensive stance against the shadow that went around from his side to his front and activated a skill.

One of his hands was pulled by a string.

It is Ageha. Vivi’s partner and a trueborn mercenary.

Ageha had trained on the empty-handed techniques, and the Asura First that she utilized was the attack that possessed the highest power from within the attacks Hokuto received in this battle, but the combo attack just now was composed by attacks that were comparable to it.

With only his free right hand, he was unable to deal with the combo of attacks that were being driven onto him by this unknown shadow.

But, he is not a hyuman.

Two more arms appear and he begins to block the punches and kicks that were like a storm.

Hokuto felt that the damage accumulation surpassed the prided regeneration ability of the Arkes and shuddered.

Receiving the 99 attacks, and having sustained heavy damage in his body, what occupied his heart was not fear, but simple admiration.

Feelings of admiration that someone that's not from Asora and has been living in hyuman society could possess such a technique with this much power.

Even if the conditions are disadvantageous for him and his group, this was an opening that was created from him having the confidence of overwhelming the hyumans.

"The preparations are done. Rascal spider, get ready... [White Thrust]!"
(Ageha)

The whole body of Ageha was overflowing with the aura of a finishing move.

The loose part of her clothes and her hair were slowly raising.

Seeing her take a half-body stance, Hokuto could tell that the fist that was on the unseen part of her body was gathering power she hadn't shown before.

"You are still continuing huh! Splendid, karate woman!" (Hokuto)

Hokuto slightly moves the hand that was controlling the thread, and he brings out the other remaining 5 arms he has and begins to create even

more threads.

“[Adamantine Yarn]!” (Hokuto)

“Fake Art, black crawling hands, [All Hazard].”

“Wa—when did you—” (Ageha)

The fist of Ageha was thrust onto the shield of threads that was made in an instant.

At that instant...

Hokuto sensed the presence of someone suddenly appearing from behind, and it had the same amount of power from the one he felt at the front, and when he turned his gaze towards that direction, he was shocked.

There was a woman he hadn't seen before right there.

The arm that was holding her dagger was covered with a black something that reached to the elbow.

That's dangerous.

Even Hokuto thought so about that skill.

This unknown woman, Vivi, had already jumped into action by propelling with the full strength of her body in order to take the neck of her prey.

Even if he has an increased number of arms now, he knows that he won't make it in time to guard.

Now that it has come to this, he had no choice but to endure it.

Hokuto, who had resolved himself to receive the attack from behind, was surprised by two things his eyes caught sight of.

“It broke through the adamantine?!” (Hokuto)

“The White Fist won't reach!” (Ageha)

The special technique of Hokuto, adding a special properties to the thread that Arkes produce and strengthen it, yarning.

It is a technique that he learned when he decided on faithfully training in his thread techniques first, and the special properties that can be given are truly varied.

Within those varieties, the adamantine property is short in effective time, but it has also shown that it is capable of repelling most attacks.

He didn't expect that a single punch would be able to break through it.

The finishing move of Ageha that she trusted the most was only able to pierce through a film of the thread and, with only that, it lost all its power and was unable to reach Hokuto.

And the other surprising thing was...

"Heave-ho~~!"

The appearance of an intruder that flew right between Hokuto and Vivi with incredible speed.

She swung down her tough metal rod with all her strength against the black lunge.

It was hard to believe, but the one that was bounced off was the metal rod.

"What unbelievable toughness and speed! Can't be helped then! Now that it has come to this, I will also be showing my trump card..."

"...From what an unbelievable place you are intruding from! Stay quietly at the backlines like the elf you are!" (Vivi)

The momentum of Vivi's attack was killed, but even with that, she once again accumulates strength directed not at the person that intruded but at Hokuto once again.

"If possible, I wanted to finish this fight without using it, but as the partner of Hokuto, I can't step back here!"

The identity of the intruder is the Forest Oni, Shii.

With the same yarning technique, the thread that was connecting Hokuto and Shii was given a strong rubber property, adding that to her

own acceleration spell, she managed to interfere instantly.

This was a speed that even Hokuto didn't expect, and it is also the reason of his surprise.

Shii immediately digested that her own prided attack was repelled, and takes a long and narrow test tube-looking bottle with red liquid from the holder at her waist.

A high-pitched sound was made when she broke the seal of it, and she drank it all.

"It looks like the humans desire this as an ingredient for their elixirs, but for us, they are the ingredient for our trump card. Evolution Drug, [Crimson Lotus]!" (Shii)

Red magic power gushes out.

A torrent of raging magic power different from her usual state envelops the body of Shii.

"With this, I will bring you down!" (Vivi)

"No you won't! I won't let you!" (Shii)

The red magic power clad metal rod and the black thrust once again cross.

Both magic powers clash and a powerful shockwave assaults the surroundings.

"What crazy power..." (Vivi)

"Ouch ouch...it really hurts~. My hands went numb. But this is my win. Well then...fly away, [Storm Homerun]!!" (Shii)

Shii holds the metal rod with both hands, and swings widely at Vivi who had her posture heavily crumbled.

The leader of the mercenary group was smashed away to the distance.

And while that happened, Shii had thrown the metal rod and that metal rod chased straight after Vivi.

"Vivi!" (Ageha)

“That Shii, she really did it. Well then, let’s take care of this one too then.” (Hokuto)

“This is—?! A string?!” (Ageha)

“It is called yarn, a technique of mine. I add a variety of properties to the threads. Woman of valour, you were strong.” (Hokuto)

“...Tch. If the White Fist had connected, the story might have been different, but...this one fight, it is our lost huh.” (Ageha)

Hokuto and Ageha exchange fearless smiles.

A few seconds later, the thread that was coiled around the right fist Ageha used for her attack began to shine...and exploded.

Ageha was blown back towards the place where her comrades were, but they were unable to stop the force of it and were blown back together with her.

“Good grief. They really attacked us aggressively there. I want to believe those were their aces in the group.” (Hokuto)

The slight damage that still remained in his body clouded his expression.

“Yeah. Even if the calculations stated that it would be okay even if we shot the Burst Spears, these guys formed a space that weakened us to a point where we were made to shot those Burst Spears in an underground environment. This is not the handywork of some regular folk. If it weren’t in these kind of circumstances, it is to a level that I would want to bring some great alcohol and listen to the principle behind it. Seriously.” (Beren)

Beren was surprised that he was able to utilize the weapon that is normally not something that can be carefreely utilized outside, and even within Asora, it is classified in a relatively high position.

As a dwarf, he possesses more interest and ability in the generalistic area rather than the specialization area, so he was incredibly interested in the structure of this labyrinth.

“Is there no second volley of the magic attack just now? What are they

planning on doing?.....Wait, ah, so that's how it is." (Shii)

"Umu."

"As expected of Waka-sama. It looks like the barrage went to where Waka-sama is." (Beren)

The two nod in succession at this.

Because they felt that the thin presence of their lord had now become clear, and at the same time, the spell, that was clad around his body and had been weakening, was once again firmly clad on him.

"Well then, let's go for one more push." (Beren)

"Yeah." (Hokuto)

"I even used an ampoule of the Crimson Lotus, so today I am okay in going at full power. Like, it is okay to wipe them all out, right?" (Shii)

"It probably goes without saying but, don't kill anyone, okay? Keep it at half-dead." (Hokuto)

Shii, who had a fiery light in her eyes, was reiterated by Hokuto.

The fight was beginning to heavily incline towards the Kuzunoha Company.

Chapter 278: Origin of talisman magic

I managed to aim.

I solved the mystery of Hitsuna's Safety Zone and destroyed it.

To explain it in more detail, the space that was supposed to actually last 1 hour, received attacks from the outside and had its time reduced to the point that it disappeared.

Right after, I adjusted the sight at the powerful magician in front of me.

I managed to aim at her.

"You really are merciless!" (Hitsuna)

The time I used to confirm this reality and the time I used to make the attack was practically nothing.

In no time at all, I shot 2 Bridds.

And then, right in the middle of the first and second shot, as if sewing the two of them, an arrow I fired with Azusa slips in.

Seeing this, contrary to her quiet look, Hitsuna quickly took out not a staff but a magic book with unbelievable speed and opened it, but my attack hit both of Hitsuna-san's hands and book.

As I thought, the power was low.

It looks like my precision with [Sakai] has recovered and the prohibition of attacks is gone, but this whole floor is retraining the power of all intruders in this floor, in other words, us.

It is apparently the ability of someone called Takane.

I honestly don't know how to undo that one.

First of all, I will suppress Hitsuna-san, reconvene with Mio and Tomoe, and then, go to where Beren's group is.

And so, onto the first part.

"Protector of Paradise, [Guardian]; Blade of Determination, [Stiletto]; Conviction, [White Card]." (Makoto) "You are using ritual magic class

spells without any arias?! Ah geez! Origin page spell formation, [Note Spell]!!” (Hitsuna) I reapply the support spells on everyone since they had slightly weakened.

Hitsuna-san opens her eyes wide when she sees my spells, and then, she does the same movements as just a moment ago and opens her magic book.

Wait, she healed already?

The ‘preparation’ that Tomoe, Mio, and I went through the trouble of coming up with...is not working at all on her.

Was it done unconsciously?

Or maybe she has crazy natural magic resistance?

But, when she was watching the projection, she didn’t show any signs of noticing.

It would be better to not think too deeply about it huh.

I will have her sleep for a while.

“Oh ho. Now there, it seems you are also shooting quite the magic without the need of arias.” (Makoto) I kick the floor and jump to the side.

The space I was in just a moment ago was ‘gouged out’ greatly.

Not only that.

The eyes of Hitsuna-san were still locked onto me with precision.

“[Crimson Ice].” (Hitsuna)

The air in the surrounding changes.

This is...

Countless numbers of ice flakes, that create a relatively low cold wave, were forming a swirl with unbelievable speed and created a storm.

I remember this.

This is what the Demon General, Mokuren, used...right, talisman magic.

It is a special art that doesn’t require the step of chanting an aria in

order to activate.

This is pretty similar to that.

Hitsuna-san's method seems to utilize pages in order to activate though.

...Hm?

Maybe it is the opposite?

In the first place, she is the first generation of the Priestesses of Lorel. Isn't there a high chance that the talisman magic itself was created by copying Hitsuna-san's spell formations?

Thinking about the standing of the Priestess in this country, it wouldn't be strange.

"The power is stronger than that person. It looks like an interesting method, and it would be nice to gaze at it like I usually do, but today, I want to reconvene with everyone so, I'm sorry!" (Makoto) I find the core of this ice storm, that is dealing continuous damage to my Magic Armor, and shoot through it with an arrow.

The spell disappeared and my field of vision recovered.

Next is...

Hitsuna-san who I caught with my eyes once again had the magic book in her hands, and around her, there were close to ten shining pages floating.

...So that just now was to take away my vision in order to prepare for her next move huh.

"[Full Chain Release], [Round Ardbeg], [Peerless Bad Fortune], Basic attack formation [Bridd]!!" (Hitsuna) ?!

Bridd?!

Because I heard such an unexpected and familiar name in the spells and perceived magic power that resembled it, my decision of shooting through all the floating pages at once was slowed by a beat.

"...This..."

A precise and peerless shot of fire element pierced through the Magic Armor.

And in that time, water, earth, and wind of the same spell did the same.

The four elements were surrounding me and were successively shooting me from all directions.

The Magic Armor was slowly gouged.

It was continuously getting gouged.

This is...strong.

It is simple and doesn't stop.

An ultra rapid-fire of several elements of Bridd.

A barrage where I can't find any openings from.

An opening to fight back...for now, I can't find it It is a perfect plan to buy time.

Moreover, if I make any poor moves, it might even inflict quite the damage.

She really got me there.

I can't make any poor moves.

"Base attack formation, [Laser Pit]; [Fake Page, Silk Giant]; [Fake Page, Soul Slaughterer]!" (Hitsuna) !!

The Magic Armor was shot by a relatively thick and strong mass of light.

About one third of the Magic Armor was shaved off, and on top of that, it didn't disappear and continued its attack, and I could tell that it was even trying to reach me.

It is that, that thing called Gerobi. <A gundam game reference> For a moment, the nostalgic game screen of the Robot fighting game popped up in my mind.

An audacious and long lasting beam attack or laser; it is truly a dream-like attack.

Now that I think about it, maybe she did something to the Magic Armor itself, the strength of the Magic Armor as a whole is greatly weakened.

Because of that, the destruction of the Magic Armor by Bridd and Gerobi is proceeding smoothly.

And finally...

“Blade Wave?!” (Makoto)

As if saying this is the finishing move, the blade wave attack reached around my chest.

I unconsciously shouted it out loud, but this is definitely a blade wave.

I was cut.

Receiving this attack that surpassed the limits, the Magic Armor was scattered away, and the attack must have been higher than what the clothes the dwarves made could resist, I ended up getting cut.

Leaving that aside, I prepare myself for the four elemental Bridd attacks that still continue as I reflexively reconstruct the Magic Armor.

This attack possesses power that I would prefer not receiving with my flesh.

From the place where I was cut by the Blade Wave, I could feel that it was devouring my magic power and eating away my spirit, but this didn't affect me at all anyways, so I ignore it.

I calmly search for Hitsuna-san with [Sakai].

It looks like she intends to shoot several more spells.

Seriously, who is the one that's merciless here.

It is surprising to see a person that's able to utilize Bridd with the same amount of power as I.

You really can't judge a book by its cover.

I still can't find a way to stop this ultra rapid-fire of Bridds. But, from what I see, this is not aiming at me, but instead, aiming at a specified location.

In that case...let's try putting into practice the super basic way of dealing with a magician.

In other words, close combat.

If I can't shoot at her properly because the barrage is being an hindrance, I will try to punch her by passing through this barrage.

It wouldn't be good to continue receiving these spells after all.

Let's go with that.

I want to hurry to where everyone is.

I change my clothes to red and reconfirm the location of Hitsuna-san with [Sakai].

Okay.

I finish the recomposition of the Magic Armor briefly, and without caring about it being shaved off once again, I spring towards the place where Hitsuna-san is.

"Wa?!"

"..."

I managed to pass through it.

There she is.

"Could it be that even with that much magic power, you are the same as Bia, a are-you-even-a-magician kind of magician?!" (Hitsuna) "..."

There's no pursuing attack of the Bridd barrage.

I can do it.

I accumulate magic power into my fist.

Utilizing the already build up momentum, I take one more step and strike her.

"[Safety Zone]!" (Hitsuna)

"?!!"

I was stopped on a paper-thin difference by a wall, and my fist along with my whole body was heavily bounced back.

“I-I can’t tag along with that type of physical aria of yours.” (Hitsuna) Safety...is it that?!

...I see.

So this is the original use of it huh.

An emergency type of ability for the moments when the enemy approaches her. So she can freely control the size when activating it, just like my [Sakai].

She is tough.

She had a face as if she had no confidence and, even if slight, she also showed actual fear for battle in her expression.

But she doesn’t run, she doesn’t break.

No matter how it looks, she is properly facing the duty she has to perform.

I ended up feeling respect towards her.

But I know that this zone of hers has a cooldown.

I won’t let her block the next one.

Several shining pages became dust and disappeared, and several new pages appeared as if protecting her.

...I see, the progenitor of talisman magic.

It is probably not a wrong guess.

It was discourteous of me to think I would be able to quickly suppress her.

She is also one of the adventurers that was sung in legends.

“To think you would use Bridd, that was a surprise.” (Makoto) “Stole the words right out of my mouth.” (Hitsuna) “Well then, let’s continue.” (Makoto)

“Uwa, so readily. Takane-kun~, a few minutes might be my limit. You are watching, right? You are listening, right? Do something!” (Hitsuna) She began weeping for help, and yet, her magic book was still shining powerfully.

This is the first time I deal with a type like her but...I don't hate it.

“Priestess-san, sorry for the wait!”

...

Eh?

What suddenly appeared in the middle of Hitsuna-san and I was...a Marikosan.

They really always appear so suddenly.

“It is obvious that you would be attacking but, it was towards me?!”
(Makoto) “Target confirmed, pulverize!!”

Pointing at me and making a bold smile, Marikosan shouts in a loud voice.

With that as the signal, I sense a great number of attacks from the front.

This time it is a barrage from the Marikosans?!

Like hell I have the time for this!

I am going to bring all of them down.

Their numbers are high, but Hitsuna-san is not the only one who can set up an automatic battery.

I grasp the number of light spears, and then, target them.

Transcribing the information to my magic composition...this time, let's show them MY Bridd battery.

“You are doing something outrageous again! [Recast]!” (Hitsuna) You kidding right?

The magic in that magic book is just unfair!!

The four elemental Bridds that were pointlessly continuing their barrage

at the back.....were now aiming here.

Even though it is a spell that was already activated once, you can still adjust or correct it before it disappears?

I feel as if I am being pointed a machine gun!

It is not like I have been pointed with one though!!

Anyways, let's deal with the attacks of the Marikosans first.

"Haaah!!"

"Wooooot?!" (Makoto)

The Marikosan lunges at me with what appears to be a thin sword that looks like a rapier.

Even when they have shot a barrage at this place, you still rush straight towards me, are you serious?!

The tip of the sword hits the Magic Armor.

As expected, there was no such miracle like destroying the Magic Armor in one hit.

"I can read you!" (Hitsuna)

This time was Hitsuna-san.

But I have already finished preparing my attack. No matter what she read of me, she has no method of obstructing my activation.

"[Demonic Axe of Thurisaz]!" (Hitsuna)

The fourth page strengthens in its shine and disappears, and what appeared were two big axes that were composed of darkness.

Ah, so that's how it is huh.

This woman can change gears in such a fast manner.

It is certainly the number one thing I don't want occurring.

Leaving aside if she can actually do it or not.

But...the words of Hitsuna saying 'I have read you!'....

Crap, she got me.

Now I understand the fearless smile of the Marikosan close to me that's getting even thicker than before.

Her charge isn't in order to support the barrage of her comrades, it is in order to have Hitsuna-san activate this spell of hers.

The big jet black axes chop the Bridd batteries that had just activated.

She is good.

It is vexing, but I end up praising her.

She didn't use brute force, she cut it by predicting the magic composition and element.

If I had to compare that technique to someone close to me, it would be Shiki.

“?!!”

A light pon sound was made and the Marikosan in front of me disappears.

Ooh, so she properly prepared a route to survive huh.

From behind me, there's the four element Bridd of Hitsuna-san; at my front, the light spears that are probably from the Marikosans.

Both of them have crazy numbers.

I have no choice but to turtle here.

My vision was sealed with light, and my hearing was sealed with a thunderous sound.

Only a few minutes left huh.

Can I escape from this in time?

Chapter 279: VS Hitsuna-san and Marikosans

“Wah...but, even if you defeat me, the fight won’t end. However, I will praise you. To think that they would be able to destroy a section of the Marikosans. Well done.....Fuhahahahaha!”

“With one attack? To think they would have the power to defeat Yellow-san with one attack. Captain!! Captain Red!! Your orders please!”

“How admirable. Truly admirable. Yellow was the weakest one among us, but her box cut <a beard style, apparently> was one you had to keep an eye on. But no need to fret. We can still do it. Don’t go on the defensive by any means. We will attack, and attack, and continue attacking! At the frontlines, we have our vice-captain, Black—”

“Captain! The attack that defeated Yellow-san penetrated all the way onto Black-san as well! Black-san has been KIA!!”

“W-What?!”

Damn it.

My power is quite weakened.

Even when I defeat these mysterious fairies that exist as a group, they revive immediately.

It seems the individuals that live long actually do grow as well but they don’t revive immediately like the rest... well, they still have that quirk of having beards though.

But those special individuals mix with the normal Marikosans and move together like an army to attack.

In other words, I have to defeat these leader type Marikosans that can’t revive immediately and make them a grouping without any chain of command.

...Group body.

...Army...

Eh, could it be...

No no no.

They are simply fighting in a style that fits their race. Yeah.

From my perspective, they are a race that everything looks like a joke, but they leave as many questions as well.

Now then, the bullet hell that was attacking me from the front had me reconstruct my Magic Armor around three times, but... for now, I decided on taking the offensive in silencing the reinforcement of Marikosans.

Not only am I in a situation where all of my magic and specs are attenuated and obstructed, if I take my time doing my aria to strengthen the attack, Hitsuna-san will come attacking me with no mercy.

If I am surrounded by several close combat Marikosans, it would be troublesome.

How to say it, even if I do short arias, there's some sort of problematic jamming that is eating out parts of the aria by force.

Most of the long aria ones, I can't bring them to activation because of that jamming and Hitsuna-san.

Even if I manage to activate it properly, the power is heavily decreased.

Inevitably, the only spells I can use are the ones that are arialess and their magic power is incredibly low.

How stressing!

For now, I have dealt with almost all the close combat ones and 2 of the ones that look like leaders.

Three of them had lined up pretty well, so when I tried shooting them with one attack, I managed to defeat two of them. Too bad the spell lost most of its power and was unable to get the third one.

"There!!"

In perspective, I totally look like the bad guy here. I created several

tentacles with the Magic Armor and controlled them to pierce through several of the close combat Marikosans that were left.

“Even when Takane-kun is reducing his power this much, he is still..... you magic power gorilla!” (Hitsuna) So rude!

The jeer that was practically a scream from Hitsuna-san pierced through my heart.

Magic power gorilla she says.

“That’s my only strong point you see! I will be passing through!” (Makoto) There’s already no Marikosans around me.

If it’s now, I might be able to crush the aria jamming and the quite strong magic book spells of Hitsuna-san with my gorilla magic power.

You see, gorillas are kind at heart you know! Apparently! <Gorilla-sensei made Gintama, hence, gorillas are the superior race> “Is that person not returning yet?!” (Hitsuna) “Probably in around three minutes!”

“3 minutes?! Make it 30 seconds!” (Hitsuna)

“?! Understood Priestess-san. Then, I am leaving it to you for 30 seconds.”

“Eh? Ah, could it be the Queen?” (Hitsuna)

“That’s right! If we have 30 seconds, we will have a way to defeat that guy!”

“Understood! Then, with all I’ve got, I will do everything I can without thinking about the consequences!” (Hitsuna) Hitsuna-san and the Marikosans are shouting at each other while in the middle of this bombardment of magic Right after that, Hitsuna-san steps forward from the line of Marikosans at the back.

And then, the pages floating around Hitsuna-san increase by more than twice the number.

Geh!

You yourself are a magic power gorilla!

This is clearly weird!

In the first place, just how much dense magic barrages has she been shooting from the very start?!

She would surpass Shiki, no jokes.

Moreover, she sometimes throws me skills that are not like those of a magician.

With someone like her as an exclusive rear guard, you would have quite a lot of peace of mind.

She is like a babysitter that has a lot of steam power.

“Let’s give it our all!”

“I can’t use Safety Zone for one minute more though. Can’t slacken my hand here!” (Hitsuna) “We can’t either. Our long lives are not just for show. We do have a good number of tricks up our sleeves. Don’t look down on grandmas!”

Kuh...

“[Guardian of the Beautiful Country]! [Cat tribe claws]! [Songstress, Queen Teresa]....!”

With a glance, I look at the Marikosans that were at the back of Hitsuna-san.

Those girls respond to that gaze with a grin.

Sword, axe, and spear; their weapons that were mainly throwing weapons have been changed into close combat ones?

Just what in the world...

“[Fake Page, Mad Sublimation]!”

!!

A golden aura covers the Marikosans.

These aura was being breathed into them...and then, it once again gushes out from them.

Their hair had turned blond...<Super Saiyan Marikosan!> Ah~, I want to retort, but this looks like it packs serious power.

A powerful barrier spell that blocks my Bridds; an attack spell which magic power is shaped as cats were flying at me like bullets. The power of their claws and fangs were abnormally sharp, and in the end, they explode and gouge out the Magic Armor; I don't know if it's random or there's some sort of condition, but there's a songstress summon that seems to be the curse type negating my attack magic.

Honestly, each one of them might rival one ring spell of Shiki.

And yet, there's still a lot of magic power remaining in the body of Hitsuna-san.

I don't know what kind of trick she is using, but it looks like this is their last spurt huh.

I can somewhat imagine who 'that person' they are referring to.

In the end, I was unable to grasp the place and power of this person they call Takane.

It was a tougher battle than expected, but once the end is at sight, your mood changes as well.

*

"[Sticky Quagmire]"

I brought down the Marikosans called Red and Blue.

The bombardment from the rear guard had weakened by quite a lot.

Hitsuna-san had finally fallen on her knees and the last three pages floating around her had disappeared.

The air in the surroundings turned heavy like a bog and coiled around me.

But that only lasted for a few seconds.

The Magic Armor resisted against those restraints and breaks it into pieces.

“Ahaha, as expected, I can’t use anymore magic power huh. Has it been 200 years since something like that has happened? Ah...now record~~.”
(Hitsuna) Just like that, Hitsuna-san tilts forward and collapses.

She is sweating bullets, and her face is completely pale.

Hm, for our side, this is the ideal way of defeating her.

This girl that self-destructed herself by running out of mana. I don’t think they lasted for 30 seconds.

“[Green Maze, Crusher]!”

Ah, a leader-type Marikosan.

So there still was one left.

The Marikosan that jumped at me had a hammer that was bigger than me and swung it.

“Sorry but, I don’t have the time to keep you guys company anymore.”
(Makoto) I place both hands of the Magic Armor together and direct them at her.

Then, I fire them.

“Taste the finishing move of the number one Marikosan that possesses herculean strength in these mutton chops--asfasd?!!”

After a thunderous sound...Green became a star.

I did think she would penetrate the ceiling and a part of her would get stuck in it, but it is certainly true that her attack had quite the power.

It almost offsetted my magic power knuckle.

But what’s with these box cut and mutton chops. Even when I know that those are the names of their beards, I honestly still feel like that’s an unknown world for me.

“Okay, I am done. From here, it would be better to go for Mio. She is in a situation where she can’t move... I can’t even imagine a situation like that but, I will go and see.” (Makoto) “I can’t let you do that.”

“Eh?”

I couldn't feel its presence at all.

But I certainly heard a voice.

There's someone directly at my right.

"To think there would be such a strong person that would be able to defeat most of the Marikosans including the elites with only one attack. It was surprising. But you still haven't seen the true essence of the one that governs over this dungeon."

A tone that possesses dignity; a noble presence.

Even when it sounds like a big shot, I don't have the time to hear what it has to say.

But I...was unable to eliminate it immediately.

Teleportation huh.

Several Bridds cut through the air.

"It is true that the time to exchange words has long been over. Then, receive this with that body of yours. The strongest trump card of the Marikosans; the strongest finishing move of I, the Marikosan Queen!"

"..."

In this place, even if it ends with just resisting, it is easy to get affected by it.

It is better to stay as natural as possible and prepare for as many situations as you can.

"[Bina Wall]" <ビーンナウォール>

My sight turned pitch black in an instant.

My ears have been blocked too?!

There's no sound.

No, not only that, I can't even move.

Then...a restraining magic?

Hey hey, wait.

I can't even breath!

I can't see anything, can't hear anything, can't move my body, can't breath; just what in the hell is this? What is this? What the hell is this, what the hell is this, what the hell is this?!

My spirit that was heading in a straight line towards panic...stops after a few seconds.

The trigger was a sound.

I could hear it.

The sound of my heart.

That's when I noticed. That's right, I am still alive.

I don't feel the presence of the Magic Armor, but I am still alive.

The name of the last spell I heard was Bina All -no, was it Bina Wall?

And those girls were strangely like Japanese people.

Then that Wall she is talking about...

Dungeon... Wall... this situation where I can't see, hear, move, breath...

...

So that's how it is.

This is probably...no, there's no doubt about it.

I also remember the words Hitsuna-san said to the Marikosan.

That they have a method to defeat me.

It is for certain that they were referring to this skill.

Dungeon, related to wall, finishing move...

I remember the first time I played a retro game, I felt like throwing the controller at the television.

That's right.

Right now, I am... inside a wall.

I place all of [Sakai] into strengthening and forcefully create the Magic

Armor.

It is probably quite the sturdy bedrock, I only managed to destroy around 1-2 meters of my surroundings.

If this is the very center of a wall, I should be satisfied that I at least managed to do it.

This is probably something my previous weakened state wouldn't have been able to do.

In that case...

This place would normally spell instant death, but maybe because it is outside of the weakening space of this Takane person, even in a situation where it feels as if my [Sakai] is still hazy, I feel pretty cleared up.

I wonder where's the 20th floor?

I don't know for how long I will manage to breath, so I should hurry.

But this Marikosan Queen, she had some outrageous trump card hidden.

I probably let down my guard because of how ideally I broke Hitsunasan.

Hm.

As always, I can't properly pick up the situation there, but...I have found the 20th floor.

If the person they are referring to is just as I think, this knight by the name of Aznoval, even if he were to arrive, the situation wouldn't change much.

But, it is the truth that I do have a slight ominous feeling.

I want to return by the time that happens.

...Digging huh. It's been awhile since I have done that.

Since the time I broke through the barrier of the Akua and Eris combi.

Let's do this.

Dig, dig, dig like crazy, and return.

Wait for me, last round!

Chapter 280: The moment we have been waiting for

Two women were breathing heavily.

They are still alive.

How impressive.

Waka is in essence a hyuman but in terms of side, he is more of a human-ja.

Watching Waka all the time by his side, I learned of the strength of this living beings called humans...or at least that's what I thought.

Tenacious body, massive magic power, unique tactics that stem from their special powers, and most of all...their will to never give up.

It might also be attributed to the fact that these guys have lived for far more time than a normal human but, they don't show signs of breaking.

So this is a human huh.

Even when their opponent possesses far more power than them, they never give up on winning and struggling.

The moment I shed blood I wasn't intending on shedding, I stopped holding back because it might make Waka worry.

It goes without saying but, this is the enemy base; The moment Mio, Waka, and I entered this floor, they activated a large scale spell.

We are in no way fighting with them in even grounds, and can't say that we are showing our full strength.

But, in the first place, a battlefield is not a place where you can wish for ideal conditions.

Complaining about that would make you lower than a greenhorn-ja.

Because this also counts as strength and luck.

And so, I have seriously acknowledged them as enemies, and fought.

Even so, I am still unable to finish them.

“Illusion, illusion, illusion. Moreover, she overwhelms us in close combat as well. What’s with that?”

“I’m totally with you. Just lowering your guard for a little bit will result in being swallowed by illusions and the match would be decided. She isn’t giving a single bit of leisure in our movements. What a terrible opponent.”

Only seeing my advances as annoying, I am the one who wants to cry.

In our first encounter, even Waka was engulfed by the illusion mist, on top of that, I learned illusion magic from Shiki.

I also utilized normal elemental magic attacks.

Of course, my body has learned swordsmanship too.

I have thrown all of that against them, and yet, they resist it, cancel it, and create distance.

These two continue to stand before me.

That’s what’s been happening all this time.

“To think that the priest there would be able to use a bow as well. You really got me good there.” (Tomoe) That’s right.

I permitted even more opposition and got injured.

I thought that the woman called Ginebia was someone specialized in only close combat and support. But the second my attention strayed from her, her partner Haku kicks her the bow she let go in an instant, and with a stance that looked exactly like that of Waka, Ginebia shot me.

The power was also plenty enough.

I don’t know if she aimed for it, but the arrow pierced the same place that her partner had shot me last time at.

That first battering at the beginning, the joint lock that followed after; I have been caught in their unpredictable attacks all this time-ja.

Well, everything has been healed, and -obviously-I have not been receiving them all without hitting back.

I have been paying them back little by little.

And so, the fruition of this is shown in the painful figure of those two.

“If that’s the case, I would like you to show a little bit of a pained expression to visualize the damage.”

“I see, it does sound reasonable. Next time, I will show you an illusion that fits your request.” (Tomoe) “...”

The patterns in the opposition of these two, and the magic power expenditure that these requires.

The former I have been observing it, and at times, when I receive damage, I had them pay by analyzing those attacks.

I have mostly grasped them all-ja.

Well, even if I say that, we are talking about these two here, so there might be some sort of trap set up somewhere. I can’t lower my guard.

The latter one, the longer the fight goes on, the more magic power it is expended.

It is at the point where the end is finally at sight.

It was a pain to the extreme, but the magic power of these two is on the level of the heroes.

Their ability to manage their magic power and the way they use it is unbelievably good-ja na.

That’s why, for a temporary amount of time, I even misinterpreted that both of them had the same amount of magic power as Shiki or even more than that.

“Sometimes, silence can be an easy to understand answer. Right, it’s like you’re telling me your falling point is close.” (Tomoe) “...Says the dragon. Also, if you are a superior dragon, go for the more rough and easy to understand attacks or it will be troublesome for us.” (Haku) As usual, the tone of Haku sounded as if she still had leeway.

No matter how cornered she is, no matter how much damage she

receives, the attitude of this girl doesn't change.

So humans can grow to have such tenacious strength of mind as well-ja na.

"Fukuku, if I did that, I would have already fallen beneath your feet. You two would be able to hunt Superior Dragons with just the two of you, no joke." (Tomoe) ...If Waka wanted to, he would be able to do that while humming though.

Seeing that these two are compensating for their lack in strength with technique and experience shows me that these two clearly have something that surpasses Waka.

Specially their teamwork, it is already polished to the point that it can be called art.

"Doma-kun told us that too." (Ginebia)

Ginebia showed her tiredness in her eyes, but she doesn't lose her composure.

Those two have been analyzing my illusions and observing them, and even at this time, they are still trying to come up with a plan to reverse the situation.

Their healing and support is also fast and calm; their sense is top tier.

If I show an opening, I will get a taste of her fists -no, I have to take into account her bow as well huh.

On top of that, her attacks synergize and bring out the full potential of the straightforward and highly accurate attacks of Haku.

They are truly strong.

"Even if that NEET dragon tells us that, it doesn't make us happy at all, but it also doesn't make me happy hearing that from you. Even though this is a compliment that's on the level of only being directed at heroes, and yet, I wonder why..." (Haku) "Sleep for a while. Everything will end with that." (Tomoe)

"...It is finally the time where we have no choice but to use all the

strength we have left.” (Ginebia) “[Dancing Bow, Septen—?!” (Haku)

“Septentrion, right?” (Tomoe)

Aiming for a surprise attack, the hand of Haku shone and her whip shoots seven light arrows.

Right now, I can't use my ability of changing reality to illusion.

But, if it's the opposite...to bestow temporary reality to illusions, it is possible.

What appears are seven arrows.

The arrows that appeared from the illusion mist and had obtained substance followed the same trajectory as the seven arrows of Haku and offsetted each other.

It is a skill that I have shot several times in my mind, moreover, it is a skill that I have seen in reality once already.

Reproducing it is easy.

“Skill copy?! What a copycat!” (Haku)

“A high-power skill that destroys seven magic pressure points of the target. Even if it doesn't manage to defeat the opponent with all attacks hitting, it would still seal their magic. It is incredibly handy-ja na. I can understand why you rely on it.” (Tomoe) “...I see, memories. So that's how it is huh. We have an unbelievable opponent.” (Haku) Haku Mokuren.

Her insight that's mixed with instinct is also polished to an extreme.

“It means that I have as much methods to throw off your teamwork-ja. And...methods to cut it off completely as well.” (Tomoe) “?! Illusion?!” (Ginebia)

I appear right in front of Ginebia.

That's right, just like she saw through in that one second, it is an illusion-ja.

But, from that illusion, only the blade of the sword has substance.

If it's with this, no matter how excelling that person is, this should be

enough. Well, even if they manage to deal with this, I won't be surprised though.

“Ah, this is cheating!” (Ginebia)

She probably noticed the possibility that it has substance, she instantaneously prepares her arm and was intending on dealing with the katana.

Splendid reaction speed-ja na.

By the time she noticed the sword slipping through her arm without making contact with it, it was already too late.

The katana made a big cut on her shoulder.

“[Blessing of the Eccentric God, Almaty]!” (Ginebia)

...And with almost no space in between, she healed herself.

She did it in the instant she was cut-ja.

Seriously, the fact that they don't even show an opening for a second really doesn't let me take this with leisure.

In that second where Ginebia was concentrating to heal, I arrive right in between the two of them even faster than the time it took for the illusion just now to appear.

These fast legs I have been concealing from them until now.

I am truly glad I continued training diligently.

Seriously thinking this in that instant, I place a finger on Haku and Ginebia's nape.

Now that I am directly touching them, have caught them off guard, and, on top of that, have shaved off this much magic power from them, it should be possible.

“[Fifth Hamlet, Mist Gorim]” (Tomoe)

It has degraded quite a bit, but it is still one of my special moves-ja.

This is something that I had warmed up to use against an army, but

these girls have a lot more backbone than your regular army.

I don't mind. They are fitting targets for it.

Glancing at the two that slowly fell into deep sleep, I heaved a big sigh.

They were with no doubt tough opponents.

Even if I was holding back, even if I was swelling in anger, I can't say it is a win.

...Wise huh.

I have learned a lot.



“Rokuya-san has been restrained, Haku-san and Ginebia-san lost, Hitsuna-san fainted in the middle of buying time?! And the side we expected to win first and provide reinforcements for the others, Picnic Rosegarden, is in a stalemate... Are you serious?”

This lineup that was practically assured victory is, for some reason, displaying a different result.

It is to the point that it can be called despairing.

In this place where many numbers are being continuously displayed in the various monitors, there's one man covered in cold sweat as he analyzes it all.

“If they had waited until Pione calmed down and waited until the messed situation aboveground was put in order, this fight wouldn't have occurred to begin with!”

It seems like he finally couldn't hold it in anymore, it was overflowing from his mouth already as the man, Makado Takane, slams the desk.

It was a stainless glass type of desk that's rare to see in this world.

This and the cheap-looking chair are the favorites of Takane.

Thanks to this, his room created a strange atmosphere that felt like that of modern Japan.

“In the first place, what is that person doing?! According to the information of the Marikosans, they should have already used the teleport formation a long time ago!” (Takane) “That’s something I want to know too. Really, for some reason, I couldn’t take the instant teleport formation.”

“There’s no way that’s possible! I have unlocked it so that all the members can utilize it the safest and fastest as possible!” (Takane) “And I’m telling you I couldn’t use it. Thanks to that, I had to use my ability ‘White Crow’ to somehow fly all the way here.”

“Now here—!! Eh?” (Takane)

“Yo, Takane-kun, long time no see. I suddenly received an emergency call, so I hurried back. It looks like the state at Kannaoui is fishy, but for now, I prioritized on returning.”

“A-Azu-san?!” (Takane)

“Yeah. And so, are they guests? Moreover, it looks like it has turned into a fight.” (Aznoval) “T-That’s right! That’s why we called you. It looks like Rokuya-san and the others won’t be able to deal with it without you.”

(Takane) “...Fumu. Looks like they are invading with quite the small amount of people. Moreover, they are opponents that can set up a giant magic barrier in this whole floor without having you notice huh.”

(Aznoval) “That’s right, they are unbelievable opponents—eh? Barrier... magic?” (Takane) Takane got surprised by the man that was suddenly inside the room, and then, he once again got surprised by what the man said.

“Umu. I couldn’t make a complete analysis of it, but it is placed in such a way that it won’t be noticed. The effects are: obstructing the trespassing to this floor, and probably some sort of illusion type of magic. But from what I see, I don’t know for what it is at all. I can’t read their intentions.”

(Aznoval) “No way. To think they would be able to form a magic in this floor of Yaso-Magatsuhi, the Prison Palace, without me noticing!”

(Takane) “That means they have quite the gathering of powerful ones. To the level that they have the chance of bringing down this place even when

confronting us right from the front. I see why my strength is needed.”
(Aznoval) The fully armored man goes ‘umu umu’ as he nods.

He is calm.

On the other hand, Takane was busily typing on the keyboard at hand.

In front of him, there’s a device that resembles that of a PC.

“Damn it, damn it!! Where is it, where is it, where is it?! Just what did they set up?!” (Takane) “Good grief. In that case, I should first regroup with Rokuya. An opponent that is trying to finish this fight without killing and under these conditions huh. I am scared of the sermon of Rokuya but...I wonder, what will be happening.” (Aznoval) A white crow that came from who-knows-where perched on the shoulder of the knight.

Aznoval whispers: ‘what is it?’ with his head turned to it.

Right after, his figure disappeared from the room.

“Oh, these are the ‘Grim Tale Gears’ of Rokuya. But, for some reason, he is not here?”

“How dare he do this to me...inflicting pain and shame in such a way... no, that’s not all there’s to it, he dared to do this to me, a follower of Waka-sama... that man, Rokuya.....”

What Aznoval saw right in his front as he finished his teleportation was a black haired girl restrained with a familiar power.

She seemed to be slightly crazy in the head –no well, seemed to be acting strange.

A japanese clothed beauty with long glossy hair wearing a kimono.

“...That Rokuya, to think he would be thought of this much by a woman that can stay so composed while caught in this...” (Aznoval) The stiffened Aznoval lets out a strained laugh with a complicated expression.

“You...”

“Oh, what is it, young lady?” (Aznoval)

“If you destroy these gears...I will kill you.” (Mio)

Even without acting, the gaze of Mio itself felt like it was enough to kill a person, and this very gaze was being poured directly at the knight.

“Yeah, I understood that from the very instant I saw it. You are unbelievably strong but...it seems you have complex circumstances.” (Aznoval) “...Yeah. That’s why, just leave me be. Honestly speaking, if I get released from this restraint in an undesirable manner...I don’t have the confidence that I will be able to hold myself back at all.” (Mio) “Then, I will not destroy it under a condition. It looks like you know the man called Rokuya but, where is he now?” (Aznoval) “He is running around somewhere.....no, he was. Fufufufu. From all the people, he ended up encountering Waka-sama. That ultra duper idiot.” (Mio) “! Looks like I have to hurry.” (Aznoval)

The figure of Aznoval disappears once again.

“So that’s the trump card they were waiting for? He probably is. Because he entered from the outside after all.” (Mio) Mio, who had slightly regained her sanity, pondered this.

“Then, he also noticed the spell that Waka-sama setup? Well, even if that’s the case, the trump card in our side is also about ready, so it doesn’t matter. Aaah...can’t these gears disappear quickly?” (Mio) But that last part she said once again changed the tone of her voice into darkness.

“But I wonder how long Rokuya will be able to last against Waka-sama. If he can endure two hits, I will consider being a bit more gentle in the punishment. Let’s see, let’s spare him from the pocky at least.” (Mio) With an innocent tone, Mio predicts the scene that will be reaching its conclusion in time.

“Since when did you change your job to mole, Makoto-kun?!”

“Hey there. It’s a long story. I was literally send to ‘be in a wall’, you see.” (Makoto) “...No no no, there’s limits to things, you know.”

The head of a person suddenly broke through the ground and appeared. Seeing the identity of it, Rokuya inadvertently shouted.

Probably with the feelings of ‘why in the hell is he okay’.

And then, the person in question said something absurd as he makes a wry smile.

He smoothly comes out from the earth and makes a big stretch.

“Leaving aside the many talks for later, the fact that you are moving around safely must mean that Mio is in a bad situation.” (Makoto) “...”

“I will have you go down.” (Makoto)

The ringleader and also intruder, Makoto, instantly changed the atmosphere around him and declared this.

“Tch, we chose the proper opponent for you though!” (Rokuya)

Is he going to fight, or flee?

Measuring his own strength and the strength of Makoto, Rokuya instantly arrived to an answer.

Flee.

Especially because his compatibility against him is way too bad.

In a situation where they are already facing each other, he has practically nothing he can do against Makoto.

Even if he were to have a party to fight against him.

In this current 1 vs 1 situation, the conclusion that Rokuya arrived at was 0% chance.

In that case, even if it's reckless, the best choice he has is to escape from him and head to the other battles to provide reinforcement.

“[Sky Wal–” (Rokuya)

With incredible initial velocity, Rokuya took distance and was about to use his forte, presence erasure -but at that instant...

His face stiffened at the fierce numbness that was running from his stomach to all over his body.

In the instant Rokuya took to create distance from him, Makoto already had bow in hand and even locked him on.

The prayer of the assassin for his skill to activate was not heeded.

His abdomen had been pierced with an arrow.

“ ... ”

“Damn...it...As expected, it was no use.” (Rokuya)

“Just in case, I used a paralyzing arrow for capture. Please take a rest. This battle is already over after all.” (Makoto) “I wonder...about that. It seems...our trump card...appeared first.” (Rokuya) Rokuya, who was shot in mid-air, fell just like that and made a dull sound once he dropped.

He twitched several times, but it seems his body can't move as he wants.

But after that, he must have caught the presence of someone, he made a small sigh, and then, showed opposition towards Makoto.

Hearing that, Makoto also searched for the presence, and then, turns his eyes towards the one that appeared.

“So the star arrives huh.” (Makoto)

“Well, you may say that, but it seems like I was slightly late. I am Aznoval, and you? Are you an acquaintance of that black haired beauty?” (Aznoval) “Yeah. I am the representative of the Kuzunoha Company, Raidou. It might be easier to understand for you guys if I were to introduce myself as Misumi Makoto though.” (Makoto) “Kuzunoha...Raidou... I see, so you are the one. Looks like fateful encounters do exist. This is just my personal feelings here but, if possible, I would have wanted to meet you in different circumstances.” (Aznoval) “I also don't have any grudge against the Adventurers of Origin. Once the matters are solved, it will definitely go well. I still think that.” (Makoto) “Well, all that said, you are currently an enemy that hurt my comrades and attacked the members of this base. So...” (Aznoval) Aznoval points the strangely-shaped big sword with one hand at Makoto.

“Can you please wait for a bit? With that, the battle will be over.” (Makoto) “I don't know what you guys are scheming, but I wonder about that. If you guys who don't wish to fight are still here putting your lives at stake, it must mean that both parties -or maybe only one side-has a decent

reason for it. It is not like there will always be a way to wrap things up nicely, you know?” (Aznoval) With fighting spirit and pressure still directed at Makoto, his right arm continuously rose in power.

“I learned of the core reason for this battle. That’s why, I created a counter-plan for it. Aznoval-san...” (Makoto) “And in that plan of yours...” (Aznoval)

“...”

“Was the reason for pointing my sword at you also accounted in it? Even if you resolve this ‘core reason’ you speak of, reasons to continue the battle will be born in the middle of the battle. And as proof of this, here I am, pointing my sword at you for hurting my family. Without knowing the basis of all this fighting.” (Aznoval) “...”

“Once again, I introduce myself. I am the Beast Knight, the squire Aznoval. The public calls me by many names, but not properly introducing myself against an opponent I will be facing seriously would be rude after all. The Kuzunoha Company’s Raidou, as an intruder, I will—” (Aznoval) “It is here. Finally broken.” (Makoto)

The expression of Makoto suddenly changes to one of joy while he was hearing the knight introducing himself.

“Hm?”

“Aznoval-san, it is true that we injured your comrades. But! The ones who attacked us no-questions-asked when we wished for a talk and negotiation were Picnic Rosegarden. Please hear the circumstances first. Our circumstances, and the circumstances of your comrades; both of them!” (Makoto) “...”

“No one has died. We have not killed a single person in this battle. We can still make up. Isn’t that right?!” (Makoto) “Circumstances huh. I somewhat understand the circumstances of you guys but...it is true that I still don’t know the reason why our side is aiming to kill you guys from the Kuzunoha Company.” (Aznoval) “Yes.” (Makoto)

“...Understood. It looks like this time buying of yours has already bore

fruit anyways, so first, let's hear what you have to say." (Aznoval)
Sheathing his sword back, Aznoval faces Makoto with a calm expression and nods.

The short but fierce battle between the Kuzunoha Company and the guardians of the labyrinth was finally reaching its conclusion.

Chapter 281: A fight to wrap up the fight

Why did this happen?

By interfering with the cognition of the body and mind of everyone, the fight was being directed little by little to an advantageous one, and we removed the one that's the main reason for this battle.

The [Fifth Hamlet Mist] of Tomoe that can realize the desires the person wants to see, and the black thread of Mio that can connect the magic power and senses of others.

We casted such large scale magic with us three, applied a stealth effect on it, and continued maintaining its activation.

The impression I have after trying it is that...it is surprisingly tiring.

I distributed magic power to Tomoe and Mio and strengthened them, and in exchange for them controlling the magic, I am the one that's fueling most of the magic power it requires.

How do I explain it so it is easier to understand.

For example; it is like bringing things to another person's house and trying to stealthily set those things inside it. Moreover, that house has quite the amount of security cameras, and has a mechanism that reacts when moving bodies are perceived.

...Was it that difficult to accomplish?

Yeah, it was as difficult as the example given.

In the end, all three of us participated in battle.

I fought against Hitsuna-san and the Marikosans.

The Marikosans are seriously dangerous. An attack that puts you inside a wall? That's way too deadly.

Being caught in a spell that the usual me would have been able to deflect if it were outside this dungeon, I had fallen into panic.

Hitsuna-san was using strong spells that clearly surpassed her own

magic power and was smashing them against me. Moreover, not only was it powerful, her sense and ability was top notch.

That talisman magic felt like, in exchange of a short aria, it costs quite a lot of magic power.

The fighting style of utilizing talisman magic in important points or utilize it simultaneously was clearly superior to that of the other mage that utilizes talisman magic as well, Mokuren. <the demon general> The talisman magic at the demon territory was the mass produced type.

The ones Hitsuna-san utilized were not activated with talismans but pages, and the power, cost, magic power, and effects were different in a lot of different ways.

In other words, an original.

I see, I gotta say, I really did portray their monstrosity properly.

There's no way the magic of hers and her skills were inherited just as they are, on the contrary, the talisman magic that remains in Lorel has been made to be more practical.

I glance to the side and I see Tomoe looking at me.

Her opponents were Haku Mokuren-san and Ginebia-san.

These two were probably thinking about stalling Tomoe by themselves, but in the end, they received a weakened version of the [Fifth Hamlet Mist] and are now inside their dreams.

They fought a long battle with Tomoe, moreover, managed to damage Tomoe a number of times.

There's no one in Asora who can achieve that...with only two people.

Aside from Mio, Shiki, Tamaki, and I, the only ones who have been able to achieve a proper hit on Tomoe have been the transcendent team combination of three counting Serwhale; the four Arkes fighting together; or a team that has five people or more.

Tomoe also learns in those instances, so, lately, she has been starting to manage the group of three people where Serwhale-san is part of.

In that sense, the team of Arkes is the one who shows the highest evaluation average.

Within my followers, Tomoe and Tamaki are the ones who the closer you manage to get them serious, the more they stress in evasion. Tomoe with magic, and Tamaki with super-fast physical evasion.

In Mio's case, her attacks get steadily vicious; she begins to add traps into her attacks. The irregular attack type.

With Shiki, it depends on his rings, but instead of his mobility getting higher, he is more the fortress type that smashes the opponent with consistent barriers and attacks. He can be called an all-rounder type that can deal against close combatants and mages, but he is currently more of a jack of all trades and master of none.

At any rate, to be able to deal damage to this Tomoe, who 'attacks don't hit' while coping with her illusion magic, for several tens of minutes is something worthy of admiration.

Let's have Tomoe show me her fight later for future reference.

At the side of Tomoe there's Mio who has the eyes of someone that had crawl from the depths of hell and, with those eyes, she was looking at the still paralyzed Rokuya-san.

It was a scary truth, but Rokuya-san seriously managed to shut out Mio.

He couldn't provide assistance on the other battlefields as he first planned, but...he accomplished that against that Mio...alone.

No seriously, that's unbelievable.

No matter what tricks he pulled, if he was able to accurately pinpoint the weakness of Mio and the compatibility in this short amount of time we met, that in itself is impressive.

If we were to compare purely on attack and defense, he shouldn't be able to pin down Mio.

This is not about being a Wise or whatever, I think that Rokuya-san

himself is impressive. Yeah.

That gear restraining barrier is something I have never seen before and it is certainly strong, but Mio should be able to break something of that level.

It was a gamble huh... against that Mio.

Well, that's how it is. Our own plan wasn't proceeding as smoothly either.

Even so, when their trump card, Aznoval-san, arrived to the battlefield, our number one most important plan had succeeded.

“...That's why I said. There won't always be a convenient method to calm things down perfectly. I would say creating one is the hardest part.”
(Aznoval) Aznoval-san, who is standing at my front with great sword in hand, says this with a wry smile as if admonishing me.

At our surroundings, there's us the Kuzunoha Company, Picnic Rosegarden, and the Adventurers of Origin; all assembled in one place.

Aznoval-san and I are the only ones right in the middle.

But even if that sword looks exactly like Masamune, that size makes me question if it can even be categorized as a weapon.

In terms of weapon, this one looks like the joke kind.

Can you really fight with that?

“Wouldn't you normally think that once something is done about the hatred of Pione-san, things would go better?” (Makoto) Because this is the biggest wall between us.

The hatred this girl, that is a part of the mercenary group, is directing at me, Raidou.

It is certainly a difficult matter.

But if we manage to remove this part, we would be able to somehow talk it out and proceed with the negotiations.

I myself had the resolve to accept the title of Wise if necessary.

And yet...

“The way you did it was bad. Not being able to extend your hand in the times when your comrades are suffering is painful. Also the fact that, even in this overwhelmingly advantageous scenario, we couldn’t defeat a single one on your side and one-sidedly suffered.” (Aznoval) “...No matter the case, I don’t want to lose any of my comrades either. Please don’t ask for the impossible.” (Makoto) “...And you don’t want them to get hurt either.” (Aznoval)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

“That’s respectable. If you think that way, it might not be too late yet.” (Aznoval) For a moment, I saw pity in the eyes directed at me by the knight.

“...”

“What did you do...to Pione? In the battlefield where her comrades were fighting, she suddenly collapsed, and declared the end of the battle. She also apologized to you guys. Yeah, really suddenly.” (Aznoval) “...”

“Tears from her eyes and mucus from her nose; from her mouth, there were remains of vomit. Her clothes were lightly wiped, but it was still quite dirtied. It was definitely not the state of someone fighting.” (Aznoval) Speaking all of this plainly, there was silent anger added into every word he said.

“I did explain it though.” (Makoto)

“You showed her an illusion via magic, was it?” (Aznoval)

“Yeah, I showed her the death of her comrades and of herself in the scenario where the battle continues because of her hatred. We transcribed our fighting force and battle techniques into the head of Pione-san, and with that information as the basis, it will compare that with the information she has of her own comrades and show her an illusion of the foreseeable annihilation.” (Makoto) “...And repeats it...infinitely.” (Aznoval)

“Until the moment she wishes the end of this battle from the bottom of

her heart. It is not infinitely.” (Makoto) It seems like Pione-san truly hates me for killing her friends in that unfortunate twist of fate.

That’s why, I wanted her to learn that if she continued holding that killing intent and hatred, this will only end up spreading even more and lead to the death of those precious people of hers.

The other precious people she has.

Our power level compared to their power level.

With the premise of us actually killing each other, everyone aside from the immortal Adventurers of Origin would die.

Of course, we wouldn’t do that for real. We wouldn’t be able to gain their cooperation if we did that.

That’s why we only did it inside that illusion, only in the head of Pione-san, and showed it in a way that’s no different from reality and repeated it.

For the sake of her choosing to have a talk instead of fighting.

“It is not only that. You made it so not only Picnic Rosegarden, even Takane-kun wouldn’t be able to notice that abnormality in her.” (Aznoval) “Of course. If you had noticed it, you would have dispelled it before she understands after all.” (Makoto) “That was also illusion magic huh. Also, shared senses and perception, was it?” (Aznoval) “That’s right. The instant we entered this floor, we changed a part of the senses of sight, touch, and perception from all the people here. Putting it in detail, it was to have them see it as if Pione-san continued providing support from the backlines and was fighting alongside them even if she were to suddenly faint in place. Also, this would be a fight where we are outnumbered, so we had their body perceive the healing magic and support magic they receive as if it was only showing $\frac{1}{3}$ of its efficiency. Well, there were some other small things we did as well, but the big ones are those.” (Makoto) “There was also one that obstructed the people that tried to enter this floor.” (Aznoval) “Ah, yeah. That was mostly to avoid having other people accidentally coming here and end up dragged in it.” (Makoto) That’s right.

In the end, it seems this proved useful as well, delaying the arrival of

Aznoval-san by a lot.

Pione-san persisted quite a lot. Even when she was continuously shown the death of her comrades, she didn't throw away her hatred, and the fight was prolonged more than expected.

Thanks to that, Shii was forced to use her Forest Oni drug in order to endure, and Hokuto had to use the yarn that he only uses when he is serious.

Beren told me that he also used a number of Blast Spears that had my rings embedded in them.

That's way too far.

Even with that, Shii was inflicted with a status ailment from an assassin team called Ryuma or Ryoma and was feeling lightheaded.

The healing made it in time and she has already calmed down though.

"...And so, this leads to the ceasefire of Pione and her apology. Raidou-kun, it is true that with this, the hatred Pione-san has towards you guys is gone. But in exchange, it looks like not only will this affect her activity in the mercenary group, it will even affect her daily life." (Aznoval) "Of course, if you wish for it, we can provide her nursing." (Makoto) "What's clear right now is that Picnic Rosegarden had the heart of one of their comrades turn into pieces right in front of their eyes." (Aznoval) "..."

But we didn't kill anyone, and even if it won't show effects immediately, we can properly nurse her back.

That's what I have been telling them.

"On top of that, even with the help of the Adventurers of Origin, they were unable to defeat a single one of the enemies that did this. It is true that there were no lives taken, but you guys achieved your objective and broke Pione. In other words, our 0 to your 100. We totally couldn't vent anything out." (Aznoval) Well, even if you tell me you couldn't vent anything out...

If this were a contest, there's the option of a rematch, but this was a

serious fight, so even if it was a regrettable defeat or a total defeat, shouldn't you accept it?

...No, it is exactly because it was a serious fight that it leaves grudges which is troublesome.

That means...even when we have entered negotiations, they won't be having a proper negotiation with me even if I accept the title of Wise?

T-That would trouble me.

We went through the pain of coming to Lorel, went all the way to this underground labyrinth, tired ourselves, and used our heads; but even with that, it wasn't enough, you say?

...Give me a break already.

In terms of fighting force, they are perfectly fit for Tsige.

Even for people on the level of Toa-san's group, there's plenty enough things they can learn from this mercenary group.

They are truly the perfect fit without doubt, in other words, it is a jackpot!

I would really like to dispatch them.

With this Pione-san girl as the centre, the other members of the mercenary group had their spears pointed at us and they are currently directed at me, creating emotions that are incredibly unwelcomed for us.

"And so, Aznoval-san, why are you pointing your sword at me?"
(Makoto) "If I had to put it bluntly, to vent." (Aznoval)

"Vent..." (Makoto)

How great.

"I personally want Picnic Rosegarden to have a good relationship with your Kuzunoha Company. I have a personal debt with you guys after all."
(Aznoval) "Eh?"

"Ah, forget about that. Anyways, Rokuya and the others already know the strength of Tomoe-san, Mio-san, and you. But the mercenary group

hasn't seen the true strength of the main cast here, right?" (Aznoval) "... Well, yeah." (Makoto)

"In that case, if we were to show a fight between me, who has been acknowledged here as a person with decent individual ability, and you, the representative of the company, they would be able to digest a variety of things." (Aznoval) "Have them accept it by showing them our fight huh." (Makoto)

I don't understand it well.

In the first place, even if Beren's group was weakened, they were still able to fight on even grounds against them, so they should be able to somewhat gauge my strength.

Can't they acknowledge it unless they see it with their own eyes?

Or is there any other reason why?

Is something like this really going to accomplish anything?

"The fight will end when either side admits defeat. With this kind of fight, we will show our full-power and let it be water-under-the-bridge no matter who wins." (Aznoval) "Okay?" (Makoto)

Is this really going to be resolved with such a haphazard method?

Then what was the point of the plan I struggled my best to make...

"The Adventurers of Origin, Makado Takane, and also Picnic Rosegarden, have accepted this. What's left is...whether the Kuzunoha Company -no, Raidou-kun accepts or not." (Aznoval) 'Or more like, they wouldn't accept it if this were to end without me fighting. I would be blamed by everyone if that were to happen', is what I heard from Aznoval-san as he muttered this with his eyes turned away.

...He does look as if he is playing dumb, but it is also true that he has shown me an easy to understand method to resolve this.

I don't know what circumstances Aznoval-san has at all, but I don't feel any hostility from him.

Maybe he doesn't have that much deep of a relation with Pione; he looks

like the most composed one here.

And yet, I can feel no hesitation from the sword that's pointed at me.

Rokuya-san told us before that as long as we manage to wrap this battle in a safe manner, he would be our ally in the negotiation.

In that case, it is fine to just fight this person and show the mercenary group my power.

Hitsuna-san already understands it, and the other three Adventurers of Origin seem to have acknowledged it as well.

There's no problem in having one more fight.

Okay.

"...Got it. Then, let's go at it with our full-power." (Makoto)

"Sorry about that. It is slightly painful that I have to clash blades against you who protected the descendants of the Hiiragi household. Let's make it flashy and show our best. On a level that would blow away all the troublesome grudges and make us all laugh." (Aznoval) Hiiragi household?

It looks like we have some sort of connection that is completely unrelated to the labyrinth or the mercenary group.

A mysterious knight that acts cordially, and yet, also hit me with the most bloodthirst and pressure I have felt today.

His peculiar greatsword and his silver full-body armor.

With his large frame coupled with this equipment, he looks even bigger.

But the incredibly problematic large scale spell that was weakening us is already gone, and my strength has already returned.

I can also utilize my magic power as I please now.

Once I call for Azusa, it was soon in my hand.

It can also be said that I am in perfect condition.

Because I switched [Sakai] to strengthening, the Magic Armor that was

covering my body is now visible.

My preparations here are done as well.

“Then, Rokuya...still can’t talk properly huh. Takane-kun, please give the begin signal.” (Aznoval) Being called, a man wearing a long white robe stood to the front.

Ah, this person is Makado Takane.

The labyrinth’s designer.

“...Raidou-shi, are you ready?” (Takane)

“Ah, yes. Go ahead.” (Makoto)

His peculiar atmosphere reminds me of my high-school friends.

In regards to PCs, those two helped me out a lot.

I remembered the faces of my truly nostalgic friends, but time won’t wait for nostalgia.

“Then...begin!” (Takane)

Takane-kun, who was assigned to signal the beginning of the battle, confirmed if I was prepared, and gave his signal to begin.

As this occurred, I prayed that the thorny gaze being poured at me from the surroundings will lessen by the time this battle ends... and so, I focus straight on Aznoval-san.

Chapter 282: Moonlight Slash

Hitsuna-san is seriously cruel.

She can use the techniques of her comrades?

No wonder there were a lot of things mixed in there that didn't seem like magic!

Maybe the effect is slightly weakened, or it might be that the cost to use is high; no, this is not the time to be analysing that.

Mad Sublimation, Zero Berserk.

The spell of Hitsuna-san that super-buffed the Marikosans -or maybe it is a skill.

So Aznoval-san was the actual user of it. The aura that is cladding around him is also slightly different.

A second after he said something nice like: 'it is fine to call me Azu-san', that guy suddenly charged at me.

And then, shouldering that sword that looks like a joke, with speed that felt like a joke, he cut down the Magic Armor like a joke.

When Shiki mimicked the movements of one of my master's acquaintances with his ring, I was surprised by the resemblance in his moves.

But the starting swift attack of Aznoval-san surprised me in how similar it is in character to my master's acquaintance.

'He might be an idiot, but he is an Oni with the sword', is what my bow master Natsu-sensei said.

A sword Oni in the modern era, that's quite the mistaken time he was born in.

I heard that he had been a mercenary in the strife zones like Natsu-sensei.

...When I look back at it, there are times when I think that maybe

everything that she told me was actually true.

The way to use the gun as well...maybe she really...

Leaving aside if he is an idiot or not, Aznoval-san had a similar air to those people.

For some reason or another, I can tell the identity of this vague atmosphere-like thing.

That is the presence of someone that has stood in the battlefield and experienced the taking away of lives in a daily basis, moreover, the kind of people that stand in that kind of battlefield on their own will and consider it their place to be.

In this world, adventurers and mercenaries are not rare.

In my world, battlefields itself felt like faraway existences for me, so I couldn't reach that answer in my time there.

"That's really tough!! Just how much magic power do you need in order to reach such an intensity in that magic power armor?!" (Aznoval) Says the person that cut it easily.

This is the first time I have seen someone cut the Magic Armor in his first swing. Moreover, at first he certainly did use power to cut the Magic Armor, but since the time he activated that skill Zero Berserk, he has been cutting it as if it were butter or tofu!

Ah, I used cooking ingredients for kitchen knives as examples.

Wait?!

"He disappeared?!" (Makoto)

Teleportation?!

The giant kitchen knife that was big enough to cover my whole field of vision disappeared together with Aznoval-san.

Hiding his body with an exaggerated move like that, and yet, what he used was a movement spell?!

Geez, he is seriously going all out with the jokes!!

“Good job, you are right!” (Aznoval)

Without even trying to hide, a voice came from above.

When I look up, I saw Aznoval-san swinging with all his strength that big joke-like sword at me.

This feeling has a close resemblance to the time I first encountered Sofia.

I move away my body from the trajectory of the sword, and as a test, I buff the Magic Armor with magic and Sakai and try to take it on with a 10 o'clock stance.

Uwa.

With resistance that I would even have to wonder if it lasted for a second, it yielded to the kitchen knife.

Both arms of the Magic Armor were cut in a single stroke, and not only that, even the Magic Armor was destroyed.

The Kuzunoha Company side was surprised by this.

Right, even I am honestly surprised by it.

He is fast and strong.

How to say it, for now, he is a truly simple person.

In other words, after activating his skill and his whole body was clad with a bluish aura...he has been unbelievably fast and strong.

But, for now, it seems like that greatsword will be missing to my side.

Let's try taking distance and set up attacks concentrated on mid and long distance magic attacks.

And let's mix in Azusa with that.

I want to make this battle flow to my advantage as fast as possible.

“You are unexpectedly honest, Raidou-kun..... I am surprised!” (Aznoval)
“Wa?!”

In mid-air, the knight on full-body armor holding a crazy big

greatsword...turned around.

The greatsword turns into a blur and disappears from my field of vision with only pure speed. The wind that was born from the speed of the sword brushed my skin.

The sword didn't hit the ground.

...Well, this is a given huh.

The movements of a weapon are something that are not easy to follow with the eye. That's a matter of course.

Moreover, my opponent is a Japanese person.

If I watch Aznoval-san himself, I should be able to predict his moves a bit.

Will it be a sword technique, a skill, or maybe something new will be coming out?

He was forcefully twisting his body to guide the greatsword into the next attack.

Looking at that forceful twisting of his...his next attack will be from the side!

There's no signs of a skill activation!

I rebuild the Magic Armor. Even if I don't block it, it should be able to buy a second, and in that second, I will fall back!

"Wow, to think you would be able to rebuild it in no time!" (Aznoval)
That won't work.

If I just fall back, I won't be able to make it up.

I have to go on the offensive with Bridd and Azusa.

The rebuild Magic Armor was destroyed just as expected.

It bought enough time and I was able to jump way to the back though.

In that moment, I felt it wouldn't be good to wait until I land to make my next move, so I fired Bridd blindly to my front.

After spreading that around, this time I concentrate on Azusa, target Aznoval-san and...shoot.

Just as I thought, after the horizontal sweep, Aznoval-san seems to have been thinking about pursuing me, but the arrow of Azusa was sucked up into the smoke screen that the Bridds created, and its presence disappears.

While being cautious of teleportation, I shoot three more arrows.

I know for sure.

All of them hit the mark.

“I didn’t expect that Magic Armor to be able to cast magic continuously without any arias.” (Aznoval) He appeared like normal.

His arms, and thighs; I certainly did hit him, and yet...

“I did show those moves to Hitsuna-san though. Stop being so barefaced.” (Makoto) “It would be unfair if I were to hear about your information before the battle, don’t you think? I call myself a knight, gotta follow the principles.” (Aznoval) ...Seriously? He hasn’t heard information of me from his comrades?

And on top of that, he came out unscathed.

“No, aren’t you Japanese?” (Makoto)

“I was, that is. Since coming here, I have called myself a knight, and I also obtained the power of one. By the time I met Root and heard a variety of things about the powers, it was already too late -I already chose to live in this way. If I had learned faster that this was simply a special trait of this parallel world, I might have chosen a different way of living.” (Aznoval) “...”

“I saved people as a game of make-believe, I killed people as a game of make-believe; as expected, I stopped that. I couldn’t help but feel disgusted at that.” (Aznoval) “...”

“That’s why, I resolved myself and decided on staking my life as a knight. But well, the knights I know of come from games and novels, in other words, the image I have is of fictitious knights. Quite laughable. Even so, if

I push through it with my all, there might be a day when I will be able to understand what it truly is to be a knight.” (Aznoval) With his all.

Do it for the rest of his life huh.

I don't know when and what experiences he went through to resolve himself to do that; I wouldn't be able to understand it, and I can't measure it at all.

Just that...for an instant, I felt like my archery had overlapped with that image of his.

“ ...”

A strange sensation of empathy.

But no words were coming out.

“But, what I miscalculated was that...I lived a lot longer than I thought I would. That truly got me good.” (Aznoval) “...By the way...” (Makoto)

As if shaking off this strange sensation, I ask him a question.

“Oh, what is it?” (Aznoval)

“I thought four arrows had hit you.” (Makoto)

“Yeah, they hurt like hell, you know.” (Aznoval)

There's no way I would accept that it just hurt!!

Even the Bridds, even if I blindly shot them, several of them should have hit him.

Just what's up with this knight.

“So you are telling me to confirm it myself. Well, obviously huh.” (Makoto) With a bold laugh, Aznoval-san once again takes a stance with the greatsword he is holding with both hands.

There were no words; his movements were the answer.

You wouldn't be able to tell from the easy-going chat we just had but, as troublesome as it may be, we are currently trying to kill each other here.

He said that this is a fight in order to vent out, and that it would be over

once one side concedes, but this is a serious fight.

I finally understand the meaning of those words.

Both of us will try to crush each other with the intent to kill.

Namely, a battle to death.

This is...a problem.

Just when will this 'I give up' even come?

For some strange reason, the desire to speak out the words 'I give up' was not welling up from inside me.

"Sad to say, we are currently mutual enemies. Raidou-kun, I was thinking about having you show me your serious state, and grasp your nature from it. But honestly, I am troubled." (Aznoval) "I am not really hiding my personality though." (Makoto) This is the truth.

I am no good at acting, and I don't like doing that anyways.

"Yeah, but if that's the case, we would be hitting a big contradiction." (Aznoval) "?"

"...Right. This is something that I should be confirming in this fight of ours. Now then, let's resume the fight. Don't worry, there's still things I can show you." (Aznoval) "If that greatsword can awaken and become a cool Japanese sword, I would like to see it." (Makoto) <Bleach reference?> "...Oh, close, but no cigar. You are going the right line there, Raidou-kun. We might have similar tastes! In that case, let's go with that next!!" (Aznoval) "!!"

It can shrink huh.

Even if you say our tastes are similar, a big sword compressing and becoming smaller is something that's pretty cliché already.

If there's something with the greatsword, the first thing that comes to mind is that it can transform and become a katana.

In the first place, in all those instances that sword was swung at me, I couldn't help but think about the kitchen knife, Masamune.

Aznoval-san holds that greatsword with a backhand grip and...takes a stance by placing it horizontally from his body.

A part of the blade was hidden behind his back.

Uhm...

“Transform into the Calamity Snake, deity of the night blade, God Yato!!”
(Aznoval) “This is bad! Vivi, Ageha!!”

With the words of Aznoval-san, the presence of something was born at his back. <An enemy Stand!> Maybe Rokuya-san guessed what was coming next, it seems he had already recovered from the paralysis, I could hear him shouting at someone.

Two presences gazed at me sharply, they didn't show any substance; after that, they revolved around Aznoval-san, and entered the greatsword.

The greatsword that had been shining with the simple radiance of a bladed sword, at that moment, began to shine with the color of the night sky.

This looks bad.

I must stop him this instant.

With Bridd and Azusa, I aim at his hand, handle of the sword, and his elbow; and then, shoot.

This is a good chance to confirm how he came out unscathed a few moments ago!

“[Unveil, Moonlight...]” (Aznoval)

...

He is...not moving?

The arrow and magic flew towards the knight directly in front, and...it hit like normal.

To the exact locations I aimed at.

Passing through the joint of the gauntlet, it pierced the wrist, and I also pierced his elbow. The Bridd hits the blade of the sword and creates an

explosion.

And yet, he is not minding it.

For just a real small amount of time, an incredibly unexpected thing made me blank-out completely.

I think I saw the greatsword shining with the color of the night sky - pulsate.

“-Slash]!!”

The vigorous voice of Aznoval-san resonates.

“.....?”

It looks as if both of his hands that were still injured had grown a size bigger.

In those hands, there was a japanese sword.

Being taken in by this sight, I let out a dumbfounded voice.

Our tastes are similar? What a lie.

The greatsword.....had gigantified.

It is true that if we were to ignore the size, it had good balance; it might be a japanese sword, but—! This is already not a size that a human can hold.

I can feel a pressure that surpasses that of Beren's 'Mountain Cleaver' from that thing!

From THE 'Mountain Cleaver' that's on the 150 galanas rate, you know?!
<no idea if this is a reference> A slash came out from his horizontal stance.

This is bad!!

It is fast!!

The mad sword, that makes me question in the bottom of my heart if I should evade it, was approaching me.

Should I jump up?!

Block it?!

There's no time to ponder about it!

Jump!!

“What an outrageous technique!!” (Makoto)

I felt I heard some sort of roar; I felt like I was being watched by something.

This is...if I remember correctly, this happened before...

And then, to my surprise...the trajectory of the sword changed.

I don't know how many times it has happened today already, but even so, the words reflexively came out from my mouth.

“You must be kidding me!!” (Makoto)

Having escaped by jumping, it was a height that would pass right below me.

My head was telling me that a sword like that wouldn't be able to change trajectories to up or down.

But if we were to narrow it down even more, it would be because it is more difficult to deal with a target that has jumped up. That's probably my thought process when I chose to jump up.

Honestly speaking, I did it out of instinct though!

And yet, it changed to up, the trajectory of the sword went up.

Evading is already impossible.

The only time I have is to move my body.

Looking at the sword that was approaching from my left, my last move was...

“Hahahaha! That's also a joke-like move there, Raidou-kun! As I thought, we really do have similar tastes!!” (Aznoval) The speed of the sword didn't show signs of slowing down.

Thanks to that, I was able to grab the blade of the sword with my elbow

and knee just as I aimed.

But...it was tough!

It was far tougher than the armour that the eldwas make!

This...won't break.

I could tell from my elbow and knee that the blade was closing in onto my body.

At the same time, because an object of gigantic mass had collided onto me at high-speed, my body was also swept to the right along with that sword.

“...At this rate...it seems like I might be needing my silver arms.”
(Makoto) This floor is quite robust, so if I am careful, it might withstand.

My basis of that is mostly on the experience I had digging the bedrock of this floor though.

“Big is great!” (Aznoval)

I still have time before the blade reaches my waist.

I cast as many barriers I can arialess.

I also recast my body strengthening.

With the approaching blade held in between my elbows and knees, I heard the hearty creed of Aznoval-san as I put my all into defense.

And at the same time, I thought this: ‘No matter how you look at it...this attack doesn't fit a graceful name like Moonlight Slash!’.

Chapter 283: The Beast Knight and The Devil

‘Hoh~’, is what Tomoe let out with plain emotion.

She was looking at her surroundings.

No matter where she looked, there was the sight of the battle they had not that long ago.

Right when Aznoval swung his giant japanese sword, Takane and Rokuya nodded to each other and advised both camps to move from the place.

There were no objections from the Adventurers of Origin and Picnic Rosegarden; in the Kuzunoha Company side, Tomoe and Mio looked at each other, and after a few second later, they nod.

They judged that they are not the type of fellows that would do an inane plan like taking hostages in the middle of the fight between Makoto and Aznoval.

At the same time, now that the weakening spell was gone and the strength of Tomoe and Mio had returned, they had the confidence that even if all of them were to turn hostile, they would be able to have everyone return to Asora in the worst case scenario.

“I see. So being called the Dungeon Master here is not just for show or a bluff huh.” (Tomoe) “...You can tell?” (Takane)

“In regards to the management of the environment, you are doing something similar to us after all. I can imagine what kind of place this is and how it functions.” (Tomoe) “...And?” (Mio)

“ ... ”

Mio follows the words of Tomoe.

Takane looked surprised at Mio who cut into the conversation.

“I can also understand that the reason you led us to this place was to

show your will of an armistice. This place is a part of the labyrinth's heart, isn't it? If we were to rampage here, it would create fatal damage."

(Tomoe) "...As you have discerned. You guys accepted our condition for a 1 vs 1, so this much is a given. Honestly speaking, we are the ones at a disadvantage here anyways. Even now, I still find it hard to believe that you guys seriously pulled through settling this matter without killing anyone, but...well, I would be grateful if you were to take this as a show of good faith that I believe you are truly aiming to do that." (Takane) "..."

After the words of Takane, the mercenary group showed their agreement to it with their eyes and sighs.

Within the group, there were also some that were sending hostility towards the Makoto that was projected in the monitor.

The primary cause of this battle, Pione, was simply looking up and trembling.

If the words of Makoto were true, she experienced an unending illusion of her comrades dying until she threw away her hatred, so it is no surprise.

"It is true that instead of calling it a bout, it is more of a one on one till death-ja na. But that man is good. To think he would be able to fight against Waka to such an extent even when his body is that of a human." (Tomoe) At the direction of Tomoe's gaze, there's a grand battle taking place between a big framed knight and Makoto, who has his body wrapped in a mass of magic power.

The Adventurers of Origin and the mercenary group were directing eyes of surprise at Makoto, and the Kusunoha Company was directing those same eyes at Aznoval.

With Aznoval's literal big move, Moonlight Slash, Makoto was smashed onto a wall, and because of it, a rain of boulders poured down onto Makoto, which he used as footholds to fix his posture, and shot a barrage of Bridds like a machine gun.

Before confirming Makoto's figure, Aznoval had already mounted a giant gold shining wild boar and soared through the sky to pursue him.

The small concentrated barrage of Bridds against the golden wild boar and the knight mounted on it; the wild boar received all of the Bridds, and Aznoval jumped from its back and plunges onto the point where the Bridds were shot.

But before he arrived, a red shadow jumps out from the cluster of boulders –it is Makoto.

While he continued shooting Bridds, he took a stance with his bow, and instead of the wild boar, he shot straight at Aznoval.

He is also firmly clad back into his Magic Armor that was small just a few moments ago.

Stopping the charge of the wild boar with the barrage of Bridds, he poured Aznoval with a barrage as well, and at the same time, he also shot several arrows with Azusa.

–But the knight didn't stop.

Plunging towards the red shadow without caring about being showered by a barrage of attacks, he swings the sword that had already returned to its previous size as if nothing.

The Magic Armor stops it for a few seconds...before being sliced.

Makoto receives the approaching blade with the sleeve of his red coat to deviate it, and punches Aznoval who surprisingly had a face as if he was having fun.

After that, the sword of Aznoval changed shape and ability again, and Makoto was taking it on clad in his red coat.

“...Even if he fights as a mage or an archer, his compatibility with Azusan should be the worst, and yet, how is he able to fight to such an extent?”

The words leaking out from the mercenary group make Tomoe let out a sigh.

“That's what I should be saying-ja na. That knight has several illusory beasts under his command, and that sword is also incredibly weird.”

(Tomoe) “This is the first time I have seen a type like this-desu wa ne. But it looks like my compatibility against him would be quite good though.”

(Mio) “If it’s you, you would just devour all the illusory beasts...along with that sword, right?” (Tomoe) “Yeah, I think I will be able to enjoy quite the variety of flavours. If it’s Tomoe-san... ‘Pure Illusion Substance’ might get repelled, but won’t ‘Fifth Hamlet’ finish it?” (Mio) “Something like that-ja no. He is an opponent I would like to enjoy a sword battle with if the situation allowed though...” (Tomoe) Tomoe and Mio were having such a conversation.

They didn’t have a single trace of worry towards their master.

And about the other members of the Kuzunoha Company; Beren, Shii, and Hokuto simply had their eyes wide opened at the opponent from the outside world that was stronger than themselves.

“Takane-kun, this is the place where you set up as your base, isn’t it. That means you should be able to double the power of Azu-san like you did with us, right? Why did you obediently cut that off?” (Hitsuna) Hitsuna asks Takane with the complexion of her face still not recovering.

“... I didn’t.” (Takane)

“Eh?”

“Azu-san is being buffed just like everyone else. Locational advantage is also part of the battle; seems to be a rule of Azu-san.” (Takane) “That means...Raidou-kun is still in his weakened state?” (Hitsuna) “Yeah. That’s why Azu-san is able to summon his illusory beasts one after the other without problems, and his recovery speed and defensive power are stronger. And, that Raidou person has unbelievable resistance, but around 30% of his power all around should have been reduced...” (Takane) “Ueee. A fight between a physical strength monster and a magic power monster huh. It is already about to lose all of its seasoning, and yet, it is frightening how it is still worth watching~.” (Hitsuna) Because of the exhaustion of running out of magic power, Hitsuna mutters this with a tired face.

“For some reason, that idiot wants to make Raidou-kun go serious though. I don’t know what he is trying to probe, but as always, he is a guy I

don't understand just what he is thinking. Though, it seems he was able to notice that he wouldn't be able to bring that out of Raidou-kun if he didn't use the locational advantage." (Rokuya) Rokuya spits these words out with an expression as if saying 'Good grief'.

"Azu-san is the type that has muscles for brain after all. But because of this, when he is interested in something, he gets scary." (Ginebia) "Bia, when you get serious, your fighting style becomes more brawny than that of Azu-san, but your way of thinking still stays the same. How to say it, cunning, or composed." (Haku) "I just use my fists when I have no choice but to teach someone a lesson~ It is how I show my affection~." (Ginebia) "Well, he did arrive late. It would trouble us if he didn't fight at least this much. That man is the one that has been involved with the world for the longest within our group after all."

"...Right. It seems like he has been leaving Lorel from time to time."

"Quite the troublesome guy, even though he is the Guild Master."

"Only showing growth in his fighting ability is also something to grieve about, seriously."

After the words Rokuya said while holding his forehead tiredly, all the Adventurers of Origin throw their own balls regarding Aznoval.

At times, they will mix in words of compliment and surprise towards Makoto as their conversation grew livelier.

"...So something like that is still playing an active role in the outside world huh."

"Unbelievable. Or more like, he has that much power himself and his subordinates are not lacking at all, and yet, why did they need to come here at all?"

"I am...interested."

"Aniki <bro>, what did you say?"

"I said I am interested, Yamato. Just what do those guys want from us? What do they want Picnic Rosegarden to do after they drag us out of

here?”

A taciturn man that was being called as Aniki by others, spoke out his interest in the Kuzunoha Company, and from there, the assassin team of Picnic Rosegarden began conversing.

“Vivi, what do we do? When that fight ends, no matter who wins or losses, I think it will end up with us having a discussion with the Kuzunoha Company.” (Ageha) “It seems Rokuya-san will be taking their side as well. Honestly, what they did was unforgivable, but...we can't just forget it, don't you think?” (Kremyu) “Ageha, Kremyu...yeah, you are right. Azu-san is most likely...interested in the reason why that boy called Raidou did all this.” (Vivi) Vivi, who is the leader of the mercenary group, is watching the state of the fight with a meek expression.

The one nodding at her side while watching the battle is Nomad, or also known as Noma; the one in charge of the foreign affairs in the mercenary group.

With the one in charge of leading the priest team, Kremyu, and the one in charge of leading the martial artist and frontline team, Ageha, at her side, Vivi was beginning to think about the negotiations that will be taking place after this. They can be said to be the brains of Picnic Rosegarden.

“Reason huh. Isn't it because he is a guy that's super messed up in the head?” (Ageha) The unfiltered words of Ageha. It is true that the bad treatment of Pione would lead to such an answer.

“If we think about it normally, that is. But that doesn't seem to be the case. If he is truly just as Ageha sees -an incredibly cruel person that would accomplish his objectives by any means-several of us would be dead already. What he did was nasty, and yet, what he is saying is actually kind. Azu-san is probably trying to press onto the mysteries of this fearsome person.”

“With such a fighting style that looks as if he didn't care about anything and was just aiming to kill him?”

“It is because of that that this can be considered a battle. He probably thinks that if he doesn't strike with his all coupled with the advantages he

already has, he won't be able to catch a glimpse of that boy's serious side. That's most definitely the case."

"...Hah... And so, we have to watch over this fight that just shaves away all of our self-confidence?"

Noma makes a wry smile. It was as if they were watching an army of one fighting against an army of one.

"Yes, that's exactly right. Let's watch over it without missing anything."
(Vivi) The words of Vivi sounded a bit as if she had given up.

"...By the way, about the costs for repairing our base..."

The one who poked 'his' head out from the side of Noma and asked this was the finance manager, Dorasena. <From now on, when the gender is not specified, I will use 'he' and 'his'.> 'He' also participated in the frontline team, but 'his' main profession is using the abacus.

"...Let's hope for the assets of the Kuzunoha Company." (Vivi)

Vivi made a small pause to think, and decided to stop thinking.

That's how much power unexpected expenses have, and that's just how fearsome columns of red numbers are.



"[Moonlight...Slash]!!"

"I have already received that too many times! Come, Silver Arms!!"
(Makoto) If it's the red armor, I can keep up with him in defense and speed.

And, I have already grasped the fighting style Aznoval-san calls Squire where he uses illusory beasts via a special summoning method.

Even if I try to shoot through them right after they are summoned, they instantly enter into the sword, and I can't even target any other beasts aside from the wild boar and the white crow.

Fighting with illusory beasts possessing his sword.

That's an incredible concept, and most of all, that sword that makes it

possible is incredible.

Its looks might be a complete joke, but its capabilities are top notch.

Beren will definitely ask Aznoval-san later to let him touch it.

...If the sword is okay by that time, that is.

“Summoning armour?!” (Aznoval)

“Big is great!! Wasn’t it?!” (Makoto)

The stupid size and speed of the sword is already weaved into me.

With the two silver arms...I grab the giant blade. And just like that, I activate the destructive power that lies within the arms without holding back.

The presence of the two types of beasts inside the sword...are crushed!!

“T-This is—! Tch!!” (Aznoval)

“You can pull out from that?!” (Makoto)

Aznoval-san jumps to the back with his creaking sword still in hand.

With his sword still in hand!!

The blade that the silver arms had caught was forcefully pulled out.

What a guy.

“Golden Wild Boar, Green Blue; Death Bringer Crow, Reibun!” (Aznoval)
He is absorbing that wild boar into his sword!

With that endurance and charging power, just what kind of sword will it turn into?!

“!!”

“[Unveil, Nameless one who must not be spoken of]!!” (Aznoval)
Aznoval-san proclaims the name of his technique and takes a stance.

A thrust huh.

The size of his sword has not changed though...

“Fast!!”

Aznoval-san lunges at me with speed faster than that of me in my red coat.

A man of large build and incredible muscles holding a giant sword is a lot faster than me.

“Haaa!!”

A scream filled with fighting spirit.

If I didn't have my Silver Arms, I would have had no choice but to take a direct hit -with the resolve of receiving damage from it.

But, I now understand that it is okay even if I use the Silver Arms.

Then, I will face his attack straight on.

“I will have you do some work, Silver Arms!” (Makoto)

That person's personality is easy to understand.

He will definitely come straight at me.

All other movements are feints.

I take a stance with Azusa.

Concentrating deeper than before.

...I aim...between the brows of Azu-san.

It is doubtful if he will be stopped with this or if he will surrender.

He is supposedly immortal, but I wonder if he doesn't feel fear of death or feel any pain.

No, don't think unnecessary things.

Aim.

“Now then, how will you take it?! Is it going to be with those ominous arms there?!” (Aznoval) Straight in front of me, there's Aznoval-san.

I will show you right now.

I stop the thrust by holding it in between the palms of the Silver Arms.

And then, crush...and shoot at him!!

“Stretch!!” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

The sword stretches.

The blade stretched in an explosive manner.

...And my back is close to a rock wall.

Hahaha, I have already grown tired of being surprised.

This must be what they call ‘no words for it’.

It is going to reach me.

But the Silver Arms are also doing their best.

The edge of the blade is slowly being destroyed, and the blade itself is thinning.

It doesn’t matter who wins; that won’t decide the match.

As long as I have the time....I can shoot!!

“Cold resolute eyes. So you have finally gotten serious?!” (Aznoval) The speed of Aznoval-san himself increases and the size of the blade also increases without stopping.

If I lower my guard, I will be swept instantly.

Ah, that has always been the case.

I just don’t have to lower my guard.

No matter if he is immortal, if I pierce his head, it should show some effectiveness.

If he was a human, that’s for certain.

“ ... ”

The sword and the arms struggle with each other.

And in that gap, I shoot my arrow.

The arrow flies to the target with conviction and without pause.

I watch over it.

Aznoval-san tries to move his head slightly away from it, but as if reading that...the arrow moves as if being absorbed by his forehead.

Right in target.

At the same time, his force, his blade, and his energy weakened radically, and then, stopped.

The sword that had increased in size by who-knows-how-much was destroyed, and returned to its previous Masamune form.

My back hit the wall.

Aznoval-san silently fell onto his knees.

I unconsciously gulp the saliva accumulated in my mouth.

Silence came back to the place.

After being pressured for so long, relief was slightly born inside of me.

“Didn’t you hear from Rokuya and the others that I am immortal, Raidou-kun?!” (Aznoval) “?!”

With an arrow still in his forehead, the hung down head of Aznoval-san was lifted up with force, and made an upward slash with his sword.

A-Are you a zombie?!

Immortal as in, seriously immortal?!

Even I don’t know what I am saying anymore!

“[Sword Spirit, Over...” (Aznoval)

I was totally caught off-guard.

It is a development I wasn’t expecting much.

“Rampaging Drive]!!” (Aznoval)

The blade of the kitchen knife Masamune that was...being driven into my red coat...exploded with the yell of Aznoval-san.

The intense ‘pain’ I haven’t felt for a long time...attacked my body.

Ah...this person...

This person is...dangerous.

Chapter 284: The Grand Battle between Monsters

One of the clear weak points of the body, the head.

Moreover, he was pierced right in between his brows, and yet, he counterattacked in a matter of seconds.

This is already an enemy that I can't consider a human as I fight him.

Seeing Aznoval taking out the arrow from his head, I was convinced of this.

"Because this is the first time I have been pierced here by someone who aimed at that location, I can tell that your aim is frightening. It hurts, and it is scary." (Aznoval) ...Pain and fear.

Is that what someone feels when they get an arrow pierced into their brain?

That's something a person would normally only experience once before dying right after.

Right now, I am not even minding my burned skin and the pain I was feeling from the pieces of metal that were pierced in me.

I have already healed from those after all.

I could only laugh.

About a lot of things.

"..."

Unless he is using some sort of skill, I have the upperhand in speed; and with that speed, I move around him as I rain arrows at him.

And at times, I would jump on footholds I create in midair and make the pattern more difficult to read.

He showed no movement. But I won't feel relieved.

In the time he is not moving, I think of a way incapacitate him.

Tomoe and Mio are here.

My cards are limited.

I could emergency summon the two of them as a last resort, but it is not necessary yet.

Now then, a way to increase the power even more.

The field of vision has been bad all this time, so I left Sakai in perception to catch the movements of my opponent. On top of that, when I increase the power, the rapid-fire speed decreases without fail.

Even if I create space between us with Bridd, the power increase limit is around 55% only.

It would be fine if that was enough power to create damage on the level of shaving off his flesh. If that's not the case, I have to go for the next move.

I can't kill him, he is tough, and his heart won't break.

He does regenerate, but the damage is still going through.

In other words, I can spread his pieces of flesh all around and have the gallery decide the end of the battle.

He can regenerate in time, but he shouldn't be able to regenerate instantly.

And that greatsword, even though it exploded, the moment I took my distance, it had already regenerated as well.

So the weapon takes after his master huh.

I really have met the worst weapon and user, seriously.

"Then, let's do it." (Makoto)

A mutter of confirmation leaked out from my mouth.

I reduced the amount of arrows I shot, and in exchange, I increased the strength of each shot.

Head, chest, waist, arms, legs; while confirming every difference between

the reactions and his way of dealing with it, I readjust the power as I go.

The instances are: moving, defending, receiving it, and evading.

I prioritize the places where he chose to evade -mainly on the vitals-and concentrated on the aim of it, but the moment the arrow comes in contact with his skin, he grabbed it or deftly broke it with his greatsword.

It looks like he hated when his movements are stopped, even if it is only for a few seconds.

Even if it reaches the point of making contact, if he goes blocking them in such a way, I can't do anything about it.

The time I need to make my arrows do further than that, the opening it would create, that in itself is a luxury I can't obtain unless I make a direct hit to his vitals.

The wounds I have that are still hurting even now are because of that Overdrive skill; maybe I should mimic that and have my arrows explode?

There's the demerit that it would take more time to shoot, and the number of arrows will decrease once again.

...No problem.

Waiting-and-seeing without hitting the target is a poor move.

If I manage to hit him, I might be able to get time to aim and shoot his vitals. Once that hits as well, I can connect it with exploding arrows and sniping.

The return is big and the increased risk is low.

It has been decided.

"It looks like you have gotten serious after the 'Sword Spirit, Rampaging Overdrive', but you have become incredibly difficult to deal with now. Well then, this is quite troubling." (Aznoval) I wonder. It doesn't sound like you think that way though.

No matter if he was actually honest about that, his tone of voice made one think he was telling the truth there.

Even when his movements have been sealed, there were no words of surrender from him.

The attacks that are not hitting directly deal practically no damage to him, and even with a direct hit of the arrows and Bridds, that damage regenerates after only a few seconds.

That's not the recovery speed of a normal person.

Maybe it is the benefit of his job called Squire, or it might be the effect of a special equipment.

He evades, defends, and when there's no choice to, he receives the attacks.

The concentration he has to be able to decide all of those in an instant is also a threat.

All of those points lumped together make up his unbelievable defensive power.

It is so unbelievable that I can even believe the stories about him plunging into magma to stop an eruption.

It is funny how I can easily picture him plunging into fire or lava.

And...this is not the behaviour of someone that has lost all cards he can play.

In other words...he still has something up his sleeve.

A slight risk has been born.

Should I not hurry the fight and wait until he has shown all his cards before making my move?

No...time is currently in Aznoval's favor.

My wounds don't heal completely, and his wounds do.

If I could cut off all his attacks with my Magic Armor, I would have been able to push this into a battle of attrition, but this opponent can easily destroy my Magic Armor with that weapon of his.

I have now understood that this kind of opponents exist, so I should

train my defensive power more.

Right now, his anti-magic specialized equipment and abilities are making him the worst kind of opponent I can have.

It is a pretty rare case, but I should come up with countermeasures so that it doesn't turn into something as troublesome as now.

I can eliminate the pain I feel by utilizing the anesthesia I used on Rokuya-san.

Right now I can still endure it, so I haven't used it though.

The problem is the bleeding.

They were severe enough that I can't completely stop it, and on top of that, I can't feel signs of it stopping naturally.

I can't tell well how the bleeding in my neck is doing. A part of my coat is torn off and the inner part that was apparently knit with the hair of the Gorgons was exposed around the waist; I think somewhere around there is bleeding internally.

It must have been because of the explosion.

It can't be helped huh.

Let's go with no changes in my decision.

"...So you are finally making your move huh." (Aznoval)

I feel I heard such mutter from the knight that was hardening his defenses like a turtle.



"No way, is Azu planning on continuing the fight? After using 'the Nameless one that must not be spoken of', he shouldn't have any other cards left." (Rokuya) "...Right. I totally thought he would call off the fight after that." (Haku) "Even using the 'Sword Spirit, Rampaging' that he rarely uses to continue fighting, it is not like him to do that." (Ginebia) "He normally treasures that child quite a lot after all." (Hitsuna) Rokuya, Haku, Ginebia, and Hitsuna; all of them saw that moment and had their

eyes wide open.

And then, they were bewildered by how the fight resumed with Makoto's atmosphere changing.

By the way, what Hitsuna-san said about 'that child' referred to Aznoval's sword.

"The last time I saw the 'Sword Spirit, Rampaging' was...ah, at the time with Doma." (Rokuya) "I wasn't there at that time, so this would be...my second time seeing it?" (Haku) "In my case, it was also at the time with Doma." (Ginebia)

"Same." (Hitsuna)

Rokuya, Ginebia, and Hitsuna let out a heavy sigh as they mention their memory about Doma.

'Pffft'

A laugh of Tomoe mixed in when Hitsuna ended talking, probably because she took a peek at that memory of theirs.

"He injured Waka-sama..... I see, so these men that are supposedly the ancestors of the adventurers are all... seriously... ufufufu. I see, I see..." (Mio) "Calm down. In the first place, Waka was aware that he would be getting injured when he accepted. If he by some chance calls us, we will crush them without mercy, but if he hasn't, keep your mouth zipped. This is a battle that Waka has acknowledged." (Tomoe) "...Hmph, I know. Leaving aside the acknowledging and all that stuff, seeing it actually occurring before my eyes still stings my heart, so I can't help it." (Mio) "That's fine then. I am saying this just in case but, just because Waka is not watching doesn't mean you can do something to Rokuya, okay?" (Tomoe) "Whatever might you be talking about?" (Mio)

"...I have been asked this of Waka-ja." (Tomoe)

"Ugh...r-really?" (Mio)

"Really-ja. If you really want to do it, you will have to ask Waka-ja na." (Tomoe) "Uuuh, then I will endure it. I will properly ask him-desu wa."

(Mio) "...So you are actually going to ask him. You are not going to give up? Good grief." (Tomoe) Tomoe holds her head after those words of Mio, and then looks at Rokuya.

As a pitiful sacrifice that will be receiving the same torture as her colleagues.

Tomoe also doesn't hold a good impression towards the knight called Aznoval that has injured Makoto, but she was greatly interested in the weapon and techniques he uses.

But right now he is currently at the other side of the monitor, in that case, Tomoe was thinking about having a talk with his comrades instead.

"Now then, Rokuya, it seems like your comrade has quite the reckless fighting style." (Tomoe) "In my opinion, I think he should have stopped the fight after the Moonlight Slash though. He is not the type of man who would do such reckless things." (Rokuya) "From what I see, he still has an ace up his sleeve-ja na." (Tomoe) "The special move of Azu is without doubt the 'Nameless' attack he showed just now. And all the attacks that came before that were all the previous versions of his special moves, Tomoe-dono. Seeing Raidou-kun receive all of those makes me want to die." (Rokuya) "You can just call me Tomoe. From what I have heard, you are quite the old one despite those looks, right?" (Tomoe) "Kukuku, it is true that I am old." (Rokuya)

"But that 'Nameless one that must not be spoken of' is quite the nice name. And the Moonlight Slash that came before that was also to my liking. It really stirs me up." (Tomoe) Tomoe speaks in good mood.

"...You go to the extent of acting like a samurai after all. You probably like those kind of things. But the 'Moonlight Slash' <Ame Tsuki Ichi Moji> may sound like Kiku-Ichimonji, but they are different type of techniques; and the 'Nameless one that must not be spoken of' was simply the name of a Sake that Azu liked the most. Those names are not that big of a deal." (Rokuya) Rokuya reveals the origins of the techniques' names.

But, even when he said that those names were not a big deal, he also felt that the strongest technique of Aznoval being named after his favorite

Sake is really like him.

“As I thought, you also do know about Kiku-Ichimonji huh. Umu umu, good good.” (Tomoe) “Whatever the case, this fight will be over soon. When that happens, we will be able to begin the negotiations.” (Rokuya) “...So, in you guys eyes, has Waka gotten a passing mark?” (Tomoe)

“...This may be an unfair way of putting it but, it depends on the viewpoint. If he manages to make Azu surrender, he would get a passing mark, but if the original basis is applied, he has already failed.” (Rokuya) “Why?” (Tomoe)

“In the first place, the reason why it turned into a 1 on 1 was because Vivi and her group were unable to vent, and the cruel treatment of their comrade.” (Rokuya) “Fumu.”

“With those in consideration, Raidou-kun should have fought Azu decently, gotten injured decently, and then, to be concrete, he should have received that ‘Nameless’ attack and announced his surrender. That would have been the best result.” (Rokuya) “...”

“If we are talking about the merchant Raidou-kun, that is. It is the so called ‘cost for gain’. In this case, the only cost it would take Raidou-kun would be him feeling a sense of defeat, but it is the best result that he shouldn’t hesitate to take. I repeat, this is the decision as a merchant.” (Rokuya) Rokuya emphasizes the position of merchant as he spoke to Tomoe.

It was not that different from the scenario Tomoe was internally thinking of.

It can be considered a pretty effective method in order to bring the negotiation that will be following into a better position.

No matter if the knight belligerently wants a fight at full-power; no matter if it didn’t result in the conclusion Makoto thought of when bringing out Azusa and piercing him with its arrows.

“Then, what did you mean when you said it would be a passing mark if he wins?” (Tomoe) “Azu is also mental for not surrendering there, but that

probably means he is planning on doing something. If with all this, Raidou-kun still manages to make that muscle-headed idiotic stubborn knight to say that he has lost, that would mean he is an eccentric that surpasses him.” (Rokuya) “...”

“The negotiations will still take place, and the weight of his words will be heavier -in a different meaning. ‘Live for the future’, this goes against my style, but well, it would be like a big reversal from his fail.” (Rokuya) “...I see.” (Tomoe)

“That said, it has currently developed into violent fight where it looks as if he is trying to turn Azu into pieces of meat. Honestly, it has been a long time I have seen Azu being so one-sidedly cornered. If he is thinking about driving Azu into a state where he can’t even declare his defeat to force us into declaring the end of the fight ourselves, it would reverse his passing mark into a fail once again though.” (Rokuya) “...”

(It is possible-ja na. It is incredibly possible that that’s what Waka is thinking-ja na...) (Tomoe) Tomoe kept silent at the contents of what Rokuya said while he was watching the fight and narrowing his eyes.

Because she thought that what he guessed of the bad future was actually pretty close to the truth.

“This is not just violent, Rokuya-san. That boy, Makoto-kun -or was it Raidou-kun?- whichever it is, he has definitely learned to use the bow in our former world.” (Ginebia) “Must be. Having that much magic power and possessing this much skill with the bow, I can only think that he had already been practicing archery from way back.” (Rokuya) Rokuya answers Ginebia who joined the conversation.

He has that much magic power. There’s no doubt he would have become a mage after arriving to this world.

But Makoto is able to utilize the bow to this extent.

Inferring that this is because he had experience before coming to this world is not that hard.

“...No, this is not archery. This is a more combat-specialized bow

technique. I am not that detailed about it either, but those are the movements of someone that has learned a bow art oriented to real combat.” (Ginebia) “Bow...art? Uhm...is it like a martial art kind of thing?” (Rokuya)

Not understanding it much, Rokuya tilts his head.

“I don’t know if it’s an old art. But he is able to show that much accuracy without relying on skills and only on his own ability. It is unbelievable.” (Ginebia) “Now that you mention it...you had a stance with the bow that was similar to Waka’s. I see, Ginebia, you have experience in archery huh.” (Tomoe) Tomoe seems to have been convinced of something and nods several times.

“Shooting with a bow at that speed without using any skills...is that even possible? No, it is indeed possible. We are being shown that right in front of us after all.” (Rokuya) “In modern Japan, there’s by no means many places where one can learn combat-oriented bow arts. And yet, the one that boy is showing right now looks like a bow art used in the battlefield. Those are definitely not the movements one can do with normal archery. Maintaining that precision, power, and that crazy rapid-fire. Archery wouldn’t ask for those kind of movements, and you wouldn’t be able to learn them there.” (Ginebia) On top of that, his ability to snipe the vitals to the point that it is nasty.

Ginebia didn’t say it out loud, but they are probably witnessing a bow technique to murder people that had silently survived in her own homeland.

But there was no happiness in seeing the inheritance of an art. Rather, she was feeling the ugliness of humanity and how scary it is; she was enveloped in a hard to get used to sensation, as if she had bitten something bitter.

‘I wonder just how Makoto, who has learned both archery and bow arts, sees the practice of archery as’, this question was born inside of Ginebia.

That’s probably why she felt like joining the conversation of Tomoe and Rokuya.

“Oh, Waka is going to make a move.” (Tomoe)

Just as Tomoe said, the shot Makoto made exploded grandly around the face of Aznoval.

His vision was blocked by the smoke that was created.

“That idiot, he even took off his armor?!” (Rokuya)

Unknown if it was right after or right before, Aznoval appeared behind Makoto.

But his appearance was strange.

Aznoval’s upper half was practically naked. The only things that could be seen were the remains of his ragged clothes, and in his hand, there’s a shield big enough to cover his whole body.

“That shield was his armor?!” (Ginebia)

“Eh, what is he thinking taking off his clothes this late in the game!!” (Rokuya) Ginebia and Rokuya realized the reality of things and yelled.

It seems like they have seen the shield before.

Aznoval goes for a ram with his big shield as he shouts something.

Makoto immediately shoots several arrows and prepares his Magic Armor.

The arrows pierce into the shield, and stop.

The arrows had enough power that it would have destroyed the shield if he had shot a few more.

Makoto was bashed at full-force in mid-air along with his Magic Armor and was blown away in the direction where Aznoval was previously.

The knight who had bashed with his giant shield showed his figure with his posture still broken, and that figure of his was slightly strange.

“Oh?”

Tomoe voices out exactly how she felt.

Aznoval had four tufty tails at his back.

“A-Azu-san’s four-tailed fox.”

“So he had the illusory beast hold the shield!!”

“So that man...should still be there!” (Tomoe)

The guess of Tomoe was correct.

She could feel a great power that made chills run down her spine.

“Eeh, that kitchen knife’s...scabbard?!” (Haku)

Haku raised a voice with a 100% surprise.

What came out in that instant the smoke screen dispersed was... was a half-naked Aznoval with no tails at his back, and in its stead, he was taking a peculiar stance with his kitchen knife Masamune.

But, this also had a strange point.

The kitchen knife Masamune that was usually laid bare –was now sheathed inside a scabbard.

His stance...and the existence of the scabbard.

““An Iai?!””

Tomoe and Rokuya shout at the same time.

They didn’t hide their emotions of disbelief and voiced it out.

Aznoval, who was lying in wait for Makoto’s approach, had his kitchen knife Masamune in his hand disappear practically at the same time the sword left the scabbard.

The greatsword, that anyone who saw it would describe it as imposing and peculiar shaped, looked as if it had literally disappeared in an instant.

“!!!”

“Waka-sama!”

After that instant....the kitchen knife Masamune stopped slightly past Makoto.

And the face of Makoto was dyed bright red.

The Magic Armor that protected his body is not there anymore.

But Makoto also had a stance with his bow that had an unnatural posture.

The arrowhead pointing at Aznoval.

“I give up! It is my lost.”

Aznoval, who had done an Iai, had also stiffened into a strange posture.

The words of surrender had come from him.

“?!”

With none of the spectators understanding the reason of it, the immortal knight Aznoval admitted defeat.

Thus, the curtains closed to the 1 on 1 that stories will be told for a long time to come in Asora and the people of the 20th underground floor; the fight that they would be calling the Grand Battle between Monsters.

Chapter 285: Invitation to the inner area

Do~ne.

“Shii, shouldn’t you return? You are a bit–no, you are quite weird right now.” (Hokuto) “...I feel kinda...spaced-out. My body is tingling, and I feel restless. But, it doesn’t feel bad. I don’t mind feeling like this forever.”

(Shii) “Hah...” (Hokuto)

“What’s with that sigh?” (Shii)

“I was wondering if that Ryoma infected you with something.” (Hokuto) “Ryoma? Ah, one of the assassins that fluttered around like a butterfly, and danced like a honeybee.” (Shii) “Yeah. Since the moment that person approached you, you have been acting weird.” (Hokuto) “Hm~, I wonder. I only have memories of being pricked by something.” (Shii) “Waka-sama is also in that state, so...well, let Shiki-sama or Tamaki-sama check it out. Understood?” (Hokuto) “Yes~.” (Shii)

Looks like Shii and Hokuto are conversing about something.

Ah...but it really feels disheartening.

I feel heavy.

“Now now, Waka. Whatever the case, the negotiation has been safely turned to our side.” (Tomoe) “It is just as Tomoe-san said–desu wa, Waka-sama. Later, I would like to ask you for permission about something in regards to Rokuya and Aznoval... That’s right, you just have to nod once, and later, I will take care of everything...” (Mio) Tomoe and Mio seem to be saying something at my side.

By the way, Beren is stuck onto Aznoval-san on a talk about his sword.

...That’s right. It is the fault of that sword.

It is way too compatible with Aznoval-san.

Even when broken, it has enough regenerative ability to restore itself in the middle of battle and has the ability of allowing illusory beasts to possess it to obtain a variety of powers.

It was a sword just for him.

But...now that I think back, the people at their side gave several hints of him.

In the battle with Aznoval-san not that long ago, I judged him as a danger, called him without honorifics like an enemy, and was trying to finish the battle by rendering him into a state where he wouldn't be able to speak at all.

It was the worst.

Because I thought I could defeat him.

It is because I judged he was an opponent I could defeat, that I decided on doing it.

Even though I should have acted as if I was having a tough fight against him so that it would reduce the animosity of Picnic Rosegarden, and on top of that, surrender while everyone was watching to finish the fight.

It was an easy answer.

If it was Rembrandt-san, he would have been able to draw the picture since the moment he received the proposal of fighting with Aznoval-san, and would have perfectly carried it out.

By surrendering, I would have been able to enter a positive negotiation environment with Picnic Rosegarden for the sake of our objective, and what I would be losing is nothing at all.

It was truly a 'no risk, high return'.

I am not a battle junkie or a warrior; I am a merchant.

That should have been the case, and yet...

What I actually did had no positives at all. Not only that, I simply got injured and made everyone worry.

This is nothing but disheartening.

"Mio, don't do anything to those two. Also, I won't nod. Got it?"
(Makoto) "N-No way. Just a bit, it will be just a little bit. Towards the man

that humiliated me to a point I have never felt before, and the man who cut W-Waka-sama's face..... If a bit is no good, let it be only a tiny little bit. With my discretion—" (Mio) ".....Mio." (Makoto)

I have heard of what Rokuya-san did to Mio.

I do have my thoughts regarding that.

But rather than feeling something towards him...it is more correct to say that I am feeling something towards myself.

Honestly, I am hating myself right now.

I would normally be able to get back up decently, but I currently can't.

The negotiation has turned with Tomoe as the focus, and from the other side, there's Vivi-san, Ageha-san, Nomad-san, who are advancing the matter, and it is practically already wrapped up.

I used the medicine of Shiki that Tomoe, Mio, and Beren brought from Asora, and treated the wound on my face and was present in the negotiations only in form.

Because I had lost quite a good amount of blood, Tomoe told me: 'I will take the front and advance the negotiation'.

Well, in the end, my role was practically coercion. Like the scary Gargoyle statues outside mansions.

Now that I have acted in such a stupid manner, the most I can do is that much.

...Hah...

"Uh...Understood. Uhm, Waka-sama, is your wound really alright now?" (Mio) Wound.

The wound on my head.

At the end of the fight, the Iai that was the trump card of Aznoval-san had scraped my face.

Right after...he stopped his sword in an unnatural posture, and then, closed his eyes and surrendered.

If I had been the one saying those words, all of this would have ended harmoniously.

When I heard that, I returned to my senses.

Rather than calling it 'returned', it was more like, I remembered.

The objective of why we came here.

It was not to fight.

My vision was completely red, and the inside of my head had gone completely pale.

His sword had cut around the part slightly above my eyebrow, and with an unpleasant sensation as if it had touched my bone, it slid and passed by.

The heat, that came right after, had cooled down the insides of my head instead.

In other words, my vision was reddened because of the blood.

It seems I was bleeding real hard.

The head is an important part, so even with small things, it would bleed extravagantly, is something I think I heard somewhere, so I myself didn't mind it much.

But, right after 2 seconds of Aznoval-san's words of surrender, everyone from the Kuzunoha Company here had surrounded me.

It seems it was good that at least one layer of skin was still adhered to it.

Even if it wasn't on the level of instant death, it could still be categorized as a grave injury.

And yet, what I was thinking at those last moments of the fight...was truly nothing good.

"Of course. Thanks, Tomoe. Thanks to you, I will be able to give a good report to Rembrandt-san." (Makoto) "Don't mind it. I am accompanying you in this journey after all. Gotta be of help." (Tomoe) "...Hey, if we had continued fighting just like that, what would have happened to the

negotiations?” (Makoto) “The result itself...wouldn’t have changed much. The negotiations would become an order, and the cooperation would have become subordination instead though.” (Tomoe) “Haha, that would have been the worst then.” (Makoto) That wouldn’t have been a negotiation or a contract anymore.

“Don’t worry about it that much, Waka. In the first place, the proposal of that Aznoval was basically a gamble in itself. Waka is not a gambler, and you are not the apostle of good luck either. On top of that, the Adventurers of Origin are all ruffians, not only him. I think this result couldn’t be helped.” (Tomoe) “Is that so.” (Makoto)

“Yes.” (Tomoe)

“In that case, should I be happy about this result where we have wrapped the negotiation up as a request with a reward, and see it as safely accomplishing the first step in making the defense of Tsige firmer?” (Makoto) “That’s right.” (Tomoe)

Tomoe nods, and Mio shakes her head up and down several times.

“Dispatch their main force to Tsige without sparing anyone and have them join in the defense, accept teaching as well. A two year contract, renewal possible. Well, the price is on the high side, but personally, in this occasion, this group is worth the price. Waka-sama, congratulations on the successful contract.” (Beren) “Beren.” (Makoto)

At some point in time, Beren had returned and spoke of the result of Picnic Rosegarden’s negotiation result and evaluated their war potential.

At his back, there’s Aznoval-san.

Even though we were fighting not that long ago, he lifted his hand and greeted with a ‘Yo’.

His sword was on his back.

The armor that had transformed into a shield, was now covering his body once again. There doesn’t seem to be any visible damage in the armor.

So this armor also has regenerative ability huh.

It is truly an equipment made for continuous battle.

Is his offensive ability reliant on the illusory beasts?

“In reality, Beren, you and the others were the ones who held them down. That evaluation you have of them is the most trustworthy one we can get. Thanks.” (Makoto) Beren bows deeply and falls back to where Shii and Hokuto are.

The pay for the mercenary group huh.

The contract was formed between them and Tsige.

However, if Beren has evaluated them to that extent, maybe the Kuzunoha Company should also recompense them in some way in the form of an extra pay.

In the first place, we were the ones who trespassed when they were in a bad state after all.

“Hey there, we sweated real nice back there, didn’t we, Raidou—is it fine if I call you Makoto-kun? I am relieved to see that the mercenary contract went well from beginning to end. It is great that the good word we put in, counting Rokuya as the first one to start it off, helped you guys out.”

(Aznoval) “Yeah, thank you very much. Tomoe, about the pay for Picnic Rosegarden...” (Makoto) In truth, the good word that the Adventurers of Origin added in had quite the influence in the negotiation.

The words of Rokuya-san, who was present as well, had the ability to convince Picnic Rosegarden into complying.

“Understood. I will reconsider a part of it. Luckily, we haven’t contacted Tsige yet. With Beren saying that much about them, it might be necessary to prepare a clause in the contract for extra pays. Leave it to me.” (Tomoe) ...As expected of Tomoe.

She can see right through what I think.

“I am counting on you. So, Aznoval-san, did you have business with us?” (Makoto) “Looks like your body is already fine. So you are also sturdy.

That's great." (Aznoval) "You as well. But well, it looks like my left arm that has been weird since before our fight hasn't healed yet." (Makoto) At first, I was bothered by it.

Because it seems it was wounded before he fought with me.

Well, even if I say that, I was fighting in such a way right as the battle began.

I stopped any reservation I had...and I even brought out my Silver Arms... hah...

How disheartening.

"Oh, don't worry about it. On the contrary, thanks to the wounds I got, I was able to utilize the illusory beasts I can only utilize when receiving a certain extent of damage, and thanks to it, I was able to recover faster. At any rate, you look pretty down. You don't seem to be okay." (Aznoval) "...Cause my decision was worth zero as a merchant." (Makoto) "...I see. Ah, Makoto-kun, in this kind of moments, thinking about it in reverse is also a valid way." (Aznoval) "What do you mean by reverse?" (Makoto)

"As a berserker, you got full points. In terms of underground dealings, I think it would also have a positive grade. When you change the evaluation terms, the grades you get are pretty exemplary, you know." (Aznoval) I don't want either of those grades.

I am being told this by a person that actually has a skill to turn himself into a berserker, so it makes me feel even weirder.

But well, instead of calling him a berserker, it was more like he simply activated the skill and was utilizing it in a composed manner.

"But, in that case, this is good timing. This will serve as a good mood-changer." (Aznoval) "Hah?" (Makoto)

Now that I think about it, I still haven't heard what business he had.

It looks like the other ones don't know the reason why he is here either. Just what is Aznoval-san planning?

"I am sorry for Beren-kun and Mio-san, but..." (Aznoval) "...Hah?" (Mio)

At that moment, Mio let out a voice as if it had come out from the depths of earth.

Mio looks like she is in an incredibly bad mood. And also, scary.

On the other hand, Beren was dumbstruck.

They had a look as if they didn't understand why their names were mentioned.

"There's a place I want to guide Makoto-kun and Tomoe-san." (Aznoval)
"Tomoe...and I?" (Makoto)

"Yeah. In this dungeon, or more accurately speaking, in this Prison Palace's inner area." (Aznoval) ...

"...Hoh?"

"It is also the place where this sword was pierced into." (Aznoval) "!!"

Beren's reaction was incredible.

His eyes opened wide as if they were going to pop out of their sockets.

"Even this floor is a pain in a lot of ways-ja, and yet, what is the merit in us going there, Aznoval?" (Tomoe) It is true that there's the possibility of a trap.

From what I sensed in our fight and thinking about this person's personality, the possibility of that is close to zero though.

It is also true that he is strong and scary, and is a person that you just can't predict what he would do next.

But his core personality is simple.

It is only his body, techniques, and mind that are weird.

...Eh? Isn't that just saying he is weird all over?

"About a merit for Makoto-kun, just as I said before, it is a small change of mood. In terms of Tomoe-san, it is not about merits or that sort of things, it is simply because you are a Superior Dragon." (Aznoval) "?"

Tomoe was confused and tilted her head.

Inviting her because she is a Superior Dragon is one strange reason.

Now that I think about it, this is a place where the name of two Superior Dragons -Doma and Futsu-are mentioned.

Doma is the useless one, and Futsu is the mysterious one.

“It is true that Makoto-kun battled with his life at stake. But that wasn’t because of hatred or because of vengeance. Then, now that the battle is over and both parties are safe...shouldn’t it be possible to hold hands?”

(Aznoval) “Well, that’s true.” (Makoto)

“ ... ”

And in reality, the battle ended and neither of us died.

If I was asked if I had some sort of personal grudge on Aznoval-san, my answer would be no.

Hearing those upright words of his, I was a bit relieved.

Tomoe simply narrowed her eyes and was staring at him though.

“...Yeah, you are like that. Then, will you come with me?” (Aznoval)
“Understood. I don’t mind. But, about Tomoe...” (Makoto) “I don’t mind either, Waka. Please do let me accompany you as well.” (Tomoe) Oh.

Looks like she didn’t keep silent because she was against it or was cautious?

But Mio cuts in between Aznoval-san and I.

“ ... ”

Without making a face as if being troubled, Aznoval-san approaches Mio and whispered into her ears.

“.....There’s no lie in those words?” (Mio)

“Of course there’s none. A knight doesn’t go back on his words.”
(Aznoval) Isn’t that supposed to be a samurai?

Is it the same for knights?

I am not well-versed in that, so I’m not sure.

“Then, be sure to bring back Waka-sama safely.” (Mio) “I promise. I would be grateful if you were to change a bit of your opinion towards us if he were to return with a healthier shade though.” (Aznoval) “I will consider it.” (Mio)

Mio slowly gets out of my front with an evil smile.

I am grateful that you are worried about me, but at least ask for the safety of Tomoe as well, Mio.

“Then, Makoto-kun, Tomoe-san, I will be your guide.” (Aznoval) “Have a safe trip, Waka-sama.”

“Have a safe trip!”

I am a merchant, and a teacher at the Academy.

I am not a berserker or something close to that.

My objective is by no means battle, it is simply a mean to an end.

Excluding a single being in specific, I don't really care about winning or losing.

It is not something to be bothered with.

Hah...looks like I have now gotten a big task to fix.

Tsige is in the middle of war, and yet, I am like this.

It is true that I am interested in the inner area of the biggest labyrinth in this world.

But I really don't think it will be something big enough to change this gloomy feeling I have.

Chapter 286: You are going that far?

With the help of Makado-san's ability, we were transported from the 20th floor to the 25th floor, and after that, we walked down the spiral stairway with Azu-san at the front, me, and Tomoe in that order, and continued going down.

In that time, we spoke about a variety of things.

We first began with self-introductions.

How to say it, maybe because we have already exchanged words several times in the middle of battle and have probed each other's heart, this feels really late.

And we also talked about his sword.

This place is a location where faint red light leaks out from the floor, and it seems the sword was pierced into the flat big rock that's right in front of us at this moment.

...

Rather than calling it a big rock...it makes me think of it as a rock seat.

More so when the surroundings are filled with a mysterious atmosphere.

Also, it gives out the feeling of a lid, or a seal.

He said that they weren't able to draw it out by force, so they tried a lot of things, and as a result of it, the method of using one of the Guild Skills managed to draw it out.

It makes me question if it was actually okay to draw it out.

Well, even if it was a bad call, it is all in the past now though.

Imagining the scenery in the past, a wry smile naturally surfaces from my mouth.

"And, what's in this place? From what I see, I can't find anything that might serve as a mood-changer for Waka, or something that a Superior Dragon like me would have interest in-ja ga? I also don't know what is

your aim at all in this.” (Tomoe)

After checking out the surroundings, Tomoe slightly narrows her eyes and looks at Azu-san.

His life as a Japanese person, his life when he just came to this world, his life as a swordsman, and also, the life in his game where he was a knight and acted as the Guild Master. On top of that, he also told us about many sides regarding the Adventurers of Origin.

He readily told me to call him Azu instead of Aznoval, and in the end, I felt like Azu-san was the way of calling that felt the most fitting inside of me, so I decided to do so.

I don't think I will get used to calling him without honorifics though.

This is the same for Azu-san as well as his comrades.

Tomoe resolutely said that this won't serve as a mood-changer for me, but honestly speaking, that conversation with him was fun.

Even if there's nothing here...I am already grateful.

“Now now, being impatient at times will lead to losses, Tomoe-san. Right. First, let's go with the main objective. Makoto-kun, after our talk, I am now confident that this will be satisfying to you.” (Aznoval)

“?”

Me?

What did I say that prompted this confidence?

Most of the talk we had was him talking of himself. Compared to that, I only spoke a bit about my time in Japan.

What could it be?

“Those words just now, should I take them as you using that talk as a pretext to extract information from my master, Waka?” (Tomoe)

“No no. It is just that now that I have invited you two, I thought that it would be best if all three of us were to benefit from it. At the very least, I wanted you to learn that I have also gained plenty enough benefits from

this as well.” (Aznoval)

“Azu-san...” (Makoto)

“Then, I will explain now. This is the deepest area of Yaso-Magatsuhi’s Prison Palace. This small space that doesn’t even reach the 100 tatami mats.” <Around 165.29 square meters>

“...”

That is indeed small.

But well, if we were to call this the garden of a residence, it can also be considered extravagant though.

Compared to the 1st floor that was a plain that extended as far as the eye can see, this is certainly small. And the entrance was also crazy.

Wouldn’t things get heated up if they were to do an adventurer festival there?

They could even bring a float there.

“And so, this place is...” (Aznoval)

“...”

Maybe he is planning on saying something hard to voice out, I could feel slight nervousness from Azu-san.

Tomoe and I wait for his words.

Is there something here?

What meaning does this place hold?

Is he about to talk of a secret truth that only a few in this world would know?

“This place is also the border between life and death.” (Aznoval)

...

Border of life and death?

Even if you tell me that...what does that mean?

“Life and death. So, this is like the Yomotsu-Hirasaka?” (Makoto)
<Boundary between life and death in Japan. It holds the same ideology as the River Styx.>

What I somehow manage to speak out were words that fit the image Azu-san just described.

A name that appears in Japanese myth.

“Makoto-kun, you are quite knowledgeable. Yeah, that’s exactly right. This is the Yomi-Birazaka of the Goddess’ World. You have saved me a good amount of explanation. A happy surprise.” (Aznoval)

I still don’t have a clear image.

Azu-san nods in satisfaction, but I on the contrary...feel like it would have been better if I hadn’t said anything.

Yomi-Birazaka...is the boundary of life and death depicted in Japanese myth.

In terms of myths, I do know about it.

But that’s all I know!

“But of course, myth and reality are different. It is normally difficult to think of life and death as different from the death of the body. Of course, I will be explaining that as well.” (Aznoval)

“...That would help a lot.” (Makoto)

It seriously would.

“From what I know of the modern Japan, it works differently. In this world, life and death are connected to the present world and the world of the dead. They exist in the same world. In other words, they have borders that can be crossed.” (Aznoval)

“...Okay?” (Makoto)

“But, even if I say that, it doesn’t mean they are completely connected. Makoto-kun, do you know of balloon art?” (Aznoval)

Now he talks about balloon art?

Isn't it the one where you inflate a long balloon to make things like dogs out of it?

A poodle surfaced in my mind.

"Is it the one that you twist balloons and make animals out of them?"
(Makoto)

"That's right. You can think of this place as the torsion. It is the place that's the closest to life and death. In other words, the border of life and death; the ravine." (Aznoval)

"...So...the sword of Azu-san that was pierced into that rock was..."
(Makoto)

"Just like what you imagine, it was a lid. In order for the torsion to not loosen." (Aznoval)

"Uhm... Doesn't that mean drawing the sword was a bad idea then? You know, in a lot of meanings." (Makoto)

Wouldn't it create a big war between the living and the dead?

"It is just as Waka says. If your story is true, it would have created a big disaster that would never disappear from history. But there's no such records in this world. It is a pretty hard to swallow story-ja na." (Tomoe)

True.

"Yeah, it was pretty bad. I only learned about the full picture not that long ago though." (Aznoval)

"..."

Uuh, it looks like he is going to ignore the question of Tomoe for now; Azu-san showed me the greatsword he had on his back.

Right now, it has no sheath.

At the end of the fight, he had a sheath for it.

And after stopping his released Iai in the middle of it, he declared his surrender.

"'Nameless one that must not be spoken of', that's the name I gave to

this sword. And it is also the name of the best technique I trained on together with my cute illusory beasts.” (Aznoval)

“...It had astonishing power.” (Makoto)

Honestly speaking, it is to a level that if I was fighting against a party and I had received that finisher technique in a timing where I was open, I might have died.

“When I hear that from you, it sounds like it is sarcasm or the biggest compliment that I can receive. It is a complicated feeling. Well, after forcefully drawing out the sentient sword and taking possession of it, it didn’t want to tell me its name, so the name I gave to it can be considered a self-deprecating name.” (Aznoval)

‘Now that I think about it, it might have been because of the anger I felt when I learned my own selfishness created a big problem’, is what Azu-san muttered as he makes a bitter smile.

“What about the answer to my question? Are you going to ignore it?” (Tomoe)

“I will answer in order, Tomoe-san. Please wait for a bit more. I have had several questions for many years, and it was just recently that I found the answer for a number of questions I had given up on. One of those was the true name of this sword.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

Now that I think about it, Azu-san’s behaviour towards Tomoe is polite, and soft.

Is it because he is a knight and that prompts him to be polite to women?

At first, I thought he did it accidentally, but it seems he is actually doing it consciously.

Is there some sort of reason behind it?

Anyways, the name of the sword huh.

If he said it was something recent, it must mean that since the time he obtained the sword, a crazy long time has passed...he assumed that the

sword was sentient...and after living together with it, he finally heard the name of the sword.

I am interested in what served as the trigger, but as expected, I am interested in the name itself.

“So, what’s the name? Uhm, only if it’s okay to hear it, that is.” (Makoto)

“Of course. The real name of this sword –no, the name of the will that dwells in it is –according to the person herself–

[Princess Seoritsu](#).” (Aznoval)

“Princess...Seoritsu? As in the japanese one?” (Makoto)

“By the way, that name and form...that sheath...and the power after releasing the attack; I learned all of those for the first time while we were battling. You see, that Iai I did at the end was that. I am glad that something as impressive as that came out in a climatic moment. If I had obtained something like that in an earlier stage, I might have changed my job to samurai. Hahahaha!!” (Aznoval)

No, it wasn’t only that.

It was at an even earlier stage than that.

Far before I was bashed with the shield the illusory beast transformed in Aznoval was holding, I had sensed its presence.

Also, that timing of surrendering...

If at that moment he learned of Princess Seoritsu’s name and obtained the hidden power it possessed... taking into account a number of weird occurrences in that fight, and the actions of Azu-san later, the power that can be inferred from it is...

“Clairvoyance.” (Makoto)

“!! Wow wow, seriously. Forget about fearsome potential, you are already fearsome. Counting all the things that I have learned of you, I seriously think this from the depths of my heart. As I thought, it really was the right choice to surrender there. I was on the verge of being rendered speechless in the very literal sense of the word.” (Aznoval)

I unconsciously muttered the possibility that came out from my mind after connecting the dots.

It seems like I hit the bullseye, the face of Azu-san lost all semblance of emotion for a moment, was dyed in surprise, and then, he began laughing like crazy. After that, he nods as if praising his own decision.

Tomoe was at a lost for words. It is probably not because of the name of the sword, but because of its power.

In that fight, Azu-san was probably able to see at the very least 30 seconds, 1 minute, or maybe even further into the future, most likely since the moment he released the 'Nameless one that must not be spoken of', and was fighting using that information.

That's why he stopped.

...At that timing...when I stopped trying to avoid the Iai, and right before I was about to finish Azu-san with the method I thought of.

It wasn't to kill him, but to render him unable to fight anymore.

I did think he was blocking my attacks way too perfectly, I did think he was attacking all the openings in my awareness too well; all of those are not things that can be aimed at in those timings that are shorter than an instant.

I was surprised, wondering what kind of instincts and experience he had that would make it possible for him to achieve all this, but in truth, it would be more natural to think of it as some sort of special ability.

Moreover, it was unnatural that it suddenly slipped into his battle style.

Right now I am unable to understand it in detail, but if we think of it as an ability that dwells inside one of the strongest weapons in the world...I feel like I can agree to it.

But, I didn't expect it to be such a convenient ability that could be used without any cost.

"Depending on the situation, it is a power that might become the natural enemy of Tomoe-san." (Aznoval)

“Hmph, bark all you want.” (Tomoe)

...So he has already accurately grasped the way to use it huh.

Extensive combat experience affects the level, but the knowledge that you gain from it, doesn't; even so, it is still fearsome.

“By the way, Azu-san, I remember hearing the name of that God in my time at Japan. I don't know the fine details of it though.” (Makoto)

If I remember correctly, it is a Goddess that is related to purification.

But...damn it!

I can't bring out any info about what kind of God it was, what was her history, or what other name she possessed.

Or more like, I know nothing.

The only things I know is that it is a Goddess related to water, and that she is related to purifications.

Since it was a sealing sword that existed for a place like the Yomi-Birazaka, it might have been a God that had that kind of backstory.

I look at Azu-san.

When he said it, it felt as if he already knew that the name of that sword was the name of a Japanese Goddess.

He probably more knows of her than me.

For some reason, I was vexed by that.

“It is the name of a Goddess that many people don't even know the name of. It is from a really old land. But well, beginning a lecture about that land at this moment would be too inadequate. Let's return to the main topic.” (Aznoval)

“The only thing I know is that she is a water Goddess that is connected to purifications.” (Makoto)

If I had more knowledge, I would have been able to understand a bit more the emotions Azu-san is feeling now.

“...That’s plenty enough -no, this might even enter the knowledgeable area already. You have splendid amounts of knowledge, Makoto-kun. You see, I have an interest in shrines and myths, and it seems you do as well. And they are limited to Japanese ones. That’s why I am slightly knowledgeable about it, that’s all.” (Aznoval)

So he even saw through this vexing of mine. Azu-san smiles at me with a kind expression.

His gaze felt incredibly far, as if he were looking at the past.

“...I was born in Shiga, you see.” (Aznoval)

Shiga.

The prefecture where the Lake Biwa is located in huh.

I have never gone there. I did think of going to Chikubushima one day.

...I couldn’t realize it though.

Of course, I don’t know much about it either.

“There was a shrine there that enshrined Princess Seoritsu. It wasn’t that much of a popular spot, it was a small shrine named Kawasogi shrine. And so, after a number of strange chances I got, I ended up being especially knowledgeable about this Goddess named Princess Seoritsu.” (Aznoval)

“Strange chances huh.” (Makoto)

Is it like how it happened with me and Tsukuyomi-sama?

I also feel like it is something different from that.

But I can somewhat understand.

I am not from any of the six prefectures of Honshu, or from Kyoto, and I haven’t gone to Shikoku either, but even with that, I have still gone to a number of places that were related to Tsukuyomi-sama.

For example; the shrine at Gassan, one of the shrines of Tsukuyomi at the side of the Kyoto’s Matsuo Grand Shrine, and the shrine of Tsukiyomi at the depths of the mountain Tokushima.

There's more places like that as well, and I still remember going to those places.

Since before meeting with the God itself, I already held decent knowledge of it.

This might be...different from a debt of gratitude, and more like...fate.

Then, in the case of the other Gods, there are as well, but the numbers decrease by a lot.

“Well, even the name is steadily being forgotten by the general populace, so Makoto-kun remembering the name is a surprise in itself. The fact that there's a sword with a name like that in this world, and that I swung it around without knowing about it...makes me feel that it is a strange coincidence.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“Ah, right. That's just talk about me. It has nothing to do with Makoto-kun, the heroes, and the Goddess. It is not something I should be talking about. Now then, let's answer Tomoe-san's question next.” (Aznoval)

“...Now then, I am looking forward to what words you are going to use to slip away from answering-ja na.” (Tomoe)

“It happened not long after I obtained this sword. Explaining the sequence of events at that time would be way too long, so I will be giving a rough explanation of it. We, who had come here before Takane-kun appeared, heard a voice when we were at the mid-floors.” (Aznoval)

“A voice?” (Tomoe)

“Yeah. At that time, we didn't know that this place was the Isekai version of the Yomi-Birazaka, so we forcefully obtained the sword that I wanted no matter what, and we were on our way back.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“The owner of that voice was the one who stopped this big disaster that you were talking about, Tomoe-san.” (Aznoval)

“...Hoh? Are you saying this is where the Goddess-sama appears?”

(Tomoe)

The voice of Tomoe sounded somewhat irritated.

She probably made the connection; the reason why she was called here together with me.

“Root, that was in those days called the Sky Dragon and also the Harmony Dragon. At that time, we thought Root was on equal footing with the Goddess. The one who taught us about how wrong this thought of ours was, was the Land Dragon, that was at times also called the Boundary Dragon...a giant dragon by the name of Futsu.” (Aznoval)

“Futsu again. I don’t know about that Superior Dragon.” (Tomoe)

“Of course, I will be showing you decisive proof for you lady who doesn’t know of it and doesn’t believe in its existence. That’s right, proof of its existence! Makoto-kun, please deploy your Magic Armor firmly! Now then, I will be introducing you briefly to the world of the dead!!” (Aznoval)

“Eh?!!” (Makoto)

“What did you say-ja to?!” (Tomoe)

Before we finished speaking, Azu-san, who had his back facing towards us, raised his sword -Princess Seoritsu-and stabbed it into the big rock.

I already had the Magic Armor deployed even before he told me to deploy it anyways, so there was no problem in that front.

The problem is...not only the big rock, even the ground itself had cracks running through all of it, and from there, a thick dark red gushed out from the openings.

And there’s also the fact that we are probably being taken to the world of the dead that I am definitely not mentally prepared to go to!

“Azu-san?! Rather than calling this an invitation, isn’t this more like kidnapping?!” (Makoto)

“Aznoval, you bastard!” (Tomoe)

“It is not a place that you can normally go while being alive, Makoto-

kun! Don't worry, this is just the beginning of an extravagant journey! It will be only the tip, so don't worry!" (Aznoval)

He didn't deny it.

So you are aware that this is practically kidnapping huh! Damn it!

What's that about 'only the tip'?! My heart is not prepared for this!!!

Chapter 287: Can I get a hundred?

“Ah, if you don’t feel well, tell me as soon as possible, okay? Well then, over here.”

I am already feeling terrible though.

As expected, even I am questioning all this.

Azu-san was walking to the front of us carefreely as if he were a tourist guide.

This is the other side of the balloon torsion. In other words, the world of the dead.

Something shining faint red was drifting in the atmosphere.

Or maybe not? Is the air itself changing colors?

Is this air that can be inhaled?

From what I remember him saying, I should be fine as long as I have the Magic Armor deployed, but...well, I can’t feel relaxed.

I feel as if we are walking at dusk in a place where sound has died out.

For some strange reason, there’s no sound of footsteps either.

The sensation at my feet is soft like that of sponge, a soft sandy beach; there’s no other words I can find that can describe this accurately.

From here, the landscape before Azu-san who is at the front is changing constantly.

At times, he stops and continues walking again, and at those times, when he does a step forward, the surrounding landscape changes completely.

A stone paved path, a forest, sand dunes, lake surface, deep inside a jungle, and also a townscape that felt familiar...and at times, there’s even the ironic cemetery. Even though the feeling at my feet was not changing at all, the scenery in front of us was changing constantly.

“This is no illusion, but this is not real either. World of the dead huh.

What a strange place.” (Tomoe) Looks like Tomoe is still fine.

Just in case, I have strengthened her into her silver haired mode.

Even so, I have no assurance that allows me to feel relaxed. That applies to me as well.

The impressions she is voicing out are not that different from the ones I have.

But, as expected of a person that uses illusions, it seems she also suspected that the abnormality in our surroundings could have been the work of an illusion or something related to it.

I see, an illusion huh.

It is true that this view is somewhat similar.

I have only experienced this a number of times in the past though. It reminds me of the feeling I get when I experience the ability of Tomoe.

There's similar points with what's happening right now and the experiences inside my head.

Even if this is not an illusion, it might be related to the past memory of a lifeform.

“Calling them inhabitants would be weird but, aren't there any dead people here? I don't see anything of the sort here though.” (Makoto) I try asking what was bothering me.

It seems this is not the first time here for Azu-san, so it should be worth a try.

“...Fumu, if you are imagining something like undeads, there's nothing like that here.” (Aznoval) “...”

It is true that I was imagining things like skeletons or zombies; in other words, things that were related to bones and dead bodies.

So there's none here?

Now that I think about it, undeads are dead people, but maybe they are the figures of the people that didn't want to come here and stayed in the

world of the living.

Or maybe they had grudges or lingering feelings that bound them to the world of the living?

...

It may not always be that way in Buddhism, but in Shinto, I feel like there's a tendency of judging them as impurities.

Or more like, practically everything was like that.

In that case, my way of thinking of the world of dead might be closer to that of Shinto.

"Apparently, they are going around in the form of souls. I don't really have much perception abilities of that type, and I am not the type that has high sensitivity to those things, but there's souls existing here and there, so it seems people that have perception abilities normally die here."

(Aznoval) "Heh~." (Makoto)

The situation is overwhelming me right now, lessening the amount of words I let out.

I try to deploy the [Sakai] I normally use to search for living things in the other side.

At that instant, everything I could see in the area was filled with reactions.

I see. It doesn't work at all.

I have to adjust it to one that can be used in this world. I wonder if it is possible.

"It seems the landscape here is also because of the ubiquity of the souls or something like that. If you have interest in the details of the area around here, Futsu who is waiting at our destination can tell you about it, but...if you can't understand the world travelling explanation of Root, you won't be able to understand this one either, you know? By the way, it was impossible for me." (Aznoval) "In that case, it would be impossible for me too." (Makoto) "So you felt dozy at the middle of it until it ended huh.

From what I remember, there's only one time I have been able to hear that explanation of hers until the end and the questioning time also lasted for several hours. There's no need to feel ashamed about it. It was a pleasant experience after all." (Aznoval) Azu-san laughs heartily.

This lively laugh of his didn't fit this place at all.

Or more like, pleasant experience?

"..."

"Root has spoke of this to most of the Wise she has met, has made joke-like conditions, and has carried them out. Could it be Root was Makoto-kun's first?" (Aznoval) <Reminder: Root gave the condition that if they didn't manage to listen to his explanation till the end, he would 'eat up' Makoto> "...What?" (Makoto)

"If it's that explanation, we were also present and listened to it till the end. And while at it, Waka...hasn't been attacked, Aznoval." (Tomoe) "... Oh, that's quite the rare case. There's only been one who has been able to listen till the end, and they had a discussion in a mysterious language, and after that, if it's from the opposite sex -and at times, even of the same sex- she would attack them and it would go all the way. Makoto-kun wasn't able to understand the explanation, moreover, wasn't attacked huh. From the atmosphere you let out, I thought you were born in the Heisei period <modern times>, but maybe you were born in the Showa period <1926-1989>?" (Aznoval) "Why did it turn into talk about my age?" (Makoto)

I don't understand what this has to do with anything.

"Refusing something like that would need quite the hard personality, right? I simply thought the Showa period had more guys made of tough elements, you see. Or maybe you already have a woman set in your heart?" (Aznoval) "...Ah."

The face of two women surfaced in my head.

...Eh?

Without even one second passing, the figure of Tomoe and Mio were also added there.

...

This is the worst.

Is my way of thinking such a pushover? That's no good.

"Hm, but even if you had such a woman in your time at Japan, you are currently in a parallel world. It won't serve to inhibit your desires at all. Then...aah..." (Aznoval) "...What-ja, Aznoval? You are making a face unbefitting of a knight-ja ga." (Tomoe) "So that's how it is. It is not Mio-san, so that means, you were already in that kind of relationship with Tomoe-san huh. Ah, so that's why Root noticed this and didn't try anything." (Aznoval) "...I am impressed by your discerning eye. Umu, you didn't hit the mark, but it isn't far from the truth-ja na. It is true that Root couldn't do anything because of me-ja yo." (Tomoe) It is far from the truth.

We are not in that kind of relationship.

Regarding the latter half of that, Tomoe listened till the end, so we were able to reject it ourselves, so in a sense, he is indeed correct though.

"...Is Ne-san a court lady? I see...that is plausible. But Makoto-kun, Mio-san is lovable as well. That woman is definitely the type that would be by your side till the end no matter what happens, you know? Luckily, this world accepts polygamy, so..." (Aznoval) In the time I was feeling self-deprecation at the harem thoughts that were somewhere in my head, the conversation between Azu-san and Tomoe was flying at unbelievable places.

Seriously, these two ride way too well in horrid topics.

"Once the legal wife is decided, things might turn that way unexpectedly fast. Umu, now that I think about it, we haven't had much of this kind of conversations. Looks like even a troublesome knight-dono like you can be of use to some extent." (Tomoe) "Oya, isn't Tomoe-san the legal wife?" (Aznoval)

"Hm? I wonder. I don't really mind the order anyways." (Tomoe) "But if you get married faster, it would make it possible to leave many more

children faster, right? Giving birth to the child of the man you love; this is the privilege given to women. From the people I know, there's a Japanese man who married a dragon woman half, and many have lived happily." (Aznoval) "...Children huh. The holy child of Waka... Fufufufu...kukuku... True. I do want it. I want it fast." (Tomoe) The face of Tomoe had turned into the 'grinning face' she rarely shows.

But this doesn't look like the face of a woman that got happy about understanding the privilege of women.

The closest comparison would be that of a grandparent waiting for her grandchildren.

It probably has already surpassed the level of parents.

"It is something natural." (Aznoval)

Azu-san nods in understanding.

No, don't go nodding.

In the head of Tomoe, I probably have married who knows how many wives in the future.

...

What's this?

Just now, I felt a strange chill running up my body.

Also, I feel...a strange gaze I have never felt before.

It is not the gaze of someone. I feel as if I am being watched by the whole world. That shouldn't be possible, but I have no other way of describing this feeling.

"I was thinking of arranging everything first so left it for later, but it might have been a huge mistake. Mio and I are different from humans, so who knows what will happen in the future. Are you saying this was a task that we should have tackled as soon as possible?!" (Tomoe) "You are still young, moreover, it seems your company is doing well. In that case, there's no worries in terms of the assets. If you can count on the support from your surroundings, this troublesome knight proposes this foolish

idea that even if you don't suddenly aim for childbirth, you should begin training for the step before that, princess Tomoe." (Aznoval) The step before that.

Ah, I see. So that's what it is.

"No, troublesome? I was simply ignorant of your consideration. Forgive me, Aznoval. Now that I think about it, it is exactly as you were worrying about-ja. There should be women aiming for him even within the Gorgons, and his resistance towards us might make him wish for a child from Tamaki." (Tomoe) ...

H-How should I enter the conversation to change the topic?

It is so deep that my countermeasures for it are right now completely blank.

"It seems like you have heard about the knowledge of Japan from Makoto-kun, so there's probably no need to say this but, in Japan, no matter how excelling or appealing of a man or woman you may be, you can only marry one person." (Aznoval) "Umu, I know." (Tomoe)

"That's why, you may at first not care about being the second wife or lower than that. The men that have become the husbands of Root get used to harems pretty fast, but Makoto-kun is most likely different." (Aznoval) "Fumu fumu." (Tomoe)

"That's exactly why being the first wife is important. Depending on her, it will affect his view of a second wife." (Aznoval) "I-Indeed." (Tomoe)

"From what I have seen, there's no doubt that first wife will be Tomoe-san or Mio-san. A happy married life is definitely awaiting you! In that case, when are you going to make your move? There's no need to even ask that! Isn't that right?" (Aznoval) "You are right! The moment is now-ja!!" (Tomoe)

No no, it is still only been one day since we met Azu-san for the first time...

Saying stuff like 'isn't that right?' and 'when are you going to make your move?', from which company did this seller come from?

Also, no, the moment is not now-ja.

“Yeah yeah, I am glad to see that you understand. I want Makoto-kun to have a fulfilling Isekai life with no regrets.” (Aznoval) That’s totally a lie.

You are currently trying to destroy my peaceful life with all you have, you know?

“By the way-ja ga, how many wives can a Japanese man manage to support-ja?” (Tomoe) “...This one depends on the person. From my acquaintances, the highest number is 60, but I also know one who fell apart with 4.” (Aznoval) “Mumuu, even when thinking about the highest number, there’s the need for each one to give birth twice to even reach the hundreds. T-Then what about the age-ja? Is it possible to make children no matter the age?” (Tomoe) “...”

T-Tomoe brooke!!

No, she got broken!!

My throat is dry.

Throwing away the part about the number of wives...a hundred children, she says?!

Moreover, it sounds as if she is not satisfied with that many?!

Is this a conversation you should be doing in the world of the dead?

Or more like, this is just a joke right? Where is the ‘you got pranked’ panel?!

“Sorry, but this also depends on the person. The top age I know of is 82, but the lowest was 40, he was unable to fertilize children no matter how much he tried...” (Aznoval) “W-What?! If we think about it from the worst case scenario, that means Waka only has 20 years left?!” (Tomoe) What are you saying with such a straight face, Azu-san?

The guy that was able to make children at 82 years old must have been some sort of superhuman, and the guy that couldn’t make children by 40 probably had some sort of circumstances behind it!

A disease, a wound, or maybe something happened in an adventure,

there's also the possibility that he led an excessive sexual life and it dried him before time.

I totally refuse a lifestyle like the latter one, okay?!

Also, don't say things like 'only has 20 years left', that's incredibly improper!

"Ah..." (Makoto)

The moment I opened my mouth because I felt like my life was seriously going to be rewritten...

"Aznoval, what are you joking around for? I thought you were going to be guiding them here as guests, but you have only been talking loudly about their lives. Don't you see that the souls are losing their composure and beginning to get noisy?" (???) I could hear a voice reverberate in my head.

It was a voice that was directed at Azu-san, but I certainly heard it as well.

Tomoe must have heard it as well, but...

"Making babies... what a blunder-jatta. Making babies-ja..." (Tomoe) She probably heard it as well, yeah.

I have an idea of who that voice is.

There's only one possibility after all.

"Futsu, it has been a while. Also, I wasn't joking at all." (Aznoval) The words of Azu-san confirm my guess.

A blue hitodama in a form similar to the souls that I imagined them to be were appearing countlessly around, gathered together, and combined to make a single form.

It is a dragon, but the oriental snake type of dragon.

What a fresh sight.

It is floating, and compared to its big body, its arms are small, and on its hands, it is holding spheres.

The contours of its head are slowly becoming clearer.

The horn is incredible.

An extravagant horn with ramifications like that of a reindeer, and at each section, it becomes wider as it goes up.

“So this is the existence that is on equal footing with Root... Futsu.”
(Makoto) “Now I am only the manager of souls though. Nice to meet you, outstanding one, Misumi Makoto-kun.” (Futsu) A pleasant voice permeates inside my head.

At the place I am looking at, there's Futsu.

It has taken form with its body covered in silver scales.

But it wasn't as if its form was fixed to only that one.

At times, Futsu would turn into a pale dragon that felt as if it were made out of ectoplasm, and at other times, it would turn even paler, transparent like wind. And there are times when it is in the middle spot of materializing and being transparent.

But the form Futsu used to greet me with, the one where it materialized completely into a body where it is covered wholly in silver scales, was a mysterious view like no other.

“ ... ”

Tomoe's eyes were wide open.

It was easy to tell that it was because of surprise.

This type of presence is not one that can be faked.

Meaning that, at the very least, it is already clear that there's actually a dragon that's comparable in strength to Superior Dragons.

The appearance of a comrade that didn't exist in the vast knowledge she had of this world.

It would be great if she gets into her serious mode and the conversation just now gets washed away though.

Chapter 288: Wish of Futsu

‘Well then, over here please’, the moment those words reverberated in his head as always, the landscape around changed completely.

The faint red world disappeared, and a forest overflowing in natural beauty appeared.

The shadow of animals could be seen in the corners here and there.

At the place where a tree that was thicker than the rest was located and the sunlight was shining, Aznoval finds a stump and immediately takes action. In other words, he walked to it and sat on it.

His moves felt practiced as if this wasn’t his first time.

And then, he looks at his right, and as if this served as a signal, the contour of a pale blue woman comes out from the shrubs.

That figure didn’t have any specific individual traits, it simply had the figure of an adult woman.

At her hands, she holds 2 mug cups.

There’s no other people here.

There was no Makoto or Tomoe.

“Looks like you were beaten up pretty badly, Azu.”

“Futsu... Even though it has been so long since the last time we met, why are you appearing in such a half-assed appearance?” (Aznoval)

“There’s no point in putting on airs using my figure with you guys anyways. I have already used up all my surprises.” (Futsu)

“What a regret. Truly a regret.” (Aznoval)

“Even if it is something important, I refuse. And so, are you going to answer me? That person, did you finally piss it off?” (Futsu)

She gives one of the mugs to Azu, and while at it, points at his shoulder.

“This is the result of an unlucky encounter. The misunderstanding has been resolved.” (Aznoval)

“‘The misunderstanding has been resolved’? It is been awhile since I have heard that classic phrase of yours. Should I interpret it as your muscles pushing through? Why did you even end up fighting against an apostle of the Goddess?” (Futsu)

“...It was to protect the lineage of my little brother. Well, it was one the few connections I have. Have to treasure it.” (Aznoval)

“I see. Sorry.” (Futsu)

“Being one of the few friends that know my favorite dishes, there’s no need for you to apologize.” (Aznoval)

Inside the mug, there’s a completely white liquid.

It is letting off warm steam.

It is hot milk.

“...It is just milk. But well, it is true that providing a feast for a person that can actually eat is pretty hard in this place though.” (Futsu)

“There was no need to prepare my share, you know. It is the same anyways.” (Aznoval)

“I have to provide the best warm reception for the person that will be bringing the guests I have been waiting for after all. The matter of the shoulder is fine already. Other injuries are...from him?” (Futsu)

“...Yeah.” (Aznoval)

“Fuh~, I was prepared for this, but seriously, he truly is a fearsome outstanding one.” (Futsu)

The mug of Futsu was filled with a blackish brown liquid that looked muddy.

Without hesitating, Futsu drinks from it and sighs once.

“I completely agree with you. Truly fearsome. If I hadn’t surrendered at that moment, I wouldn’t have been able to come here for sure.” (Aznoval)

“Even in your state where you had learned the name of the Princess?” (Futsu)

“...So you really did know. No, I won’t ask you about about how you know about me knowing the name of Princess, okay?! No way I will!”
(Aznoval)

Maybe Aznoval remembered something of his past, he screamed as if in a spasm.

“Yeah yeah, I said something unnecessary there. And so, about the future you might have ended up in...” (Futsu)

“First of all, Makoto-kun stopped in the middle of evading the Iai I unleashed. It is the technique that was activated when I first heard of the name of Princess Seoritsu.” (Aznoval)

Aznoval recalls the fight.

The fight that he was doing just a while ago.

It still remains vividly in his memories.

“He purposely received an attack that he could avoid? A technique that you yourself had unleashed for the first time? Isn’t that just you misunderstanding?” (Futsu)

“In my eyes, that’s how I saw it.” (Aznoval)

“What was his aim?” (Futsu)

“In order to bring me down.” (Aznoval)

“...He should have known you are immortal, right?” (Futsu)

“But I do get injured. If I receive a grave injury, there’s the need for time to recover. The worst the wound, the longer it immobilizes me.” (Aznoval)

“ ... ”

“He stopped evading in the middle of it, and received my sword with his head. It cut the meat at his forehead and the blade slipped from his skull. But well, I don’t know at all how much of it was calculated. But for him, that must have been the ideal moment to go on the offensive.” (Aznoval)

...

“And then, before I can shift the katana and seal the battle with a

reverse swing, Makoto-kun would create distance by shooting an incredibly powerful arrow that had several ring-like things added to it.” (Aznoval)

“...Was that his trump card?” (Futsu)

“Next, he would shoot four rapid-fires of the light arrows that incapacitated Rokuya at the openings of my armor, and in those few seconds restrained, the silver arms would be appearing at both of my sides.” (Aznoval) <pretty sure he had no armor at that moment>

“Silver arms? What’s that?” (Futsu)

“I don’t know at all. I have never seen them before or heard about them. It seemed to obey the Elder Dwarf, so maybe it is a treasure of them, or maybe it is something Makoto-kun had them make.” (Aznoval)

“So he is controlling armor designed for giants with magic power?” (Futsu)

“...Might be the case, but my intuition is telling me otherwise. Rather than calling it an equipment for giants, it was more like...the arms of a robot.” (Aznoval)

“Robot. Aah, an evolved version of a Golem? The Japanese people called them Robots.” (Futsu)

“Umu. But even so, I felt that even for something like that, it consumed an incredible amount of magic power. He didn’t look like the type who would wish for robots, and it didn’t look as if he was utilizing equipment for giants. The one point I am certain of is that it possesses dreadful efficiency.” (Aznoval)

“To the point that it would make you unable to act for a long period of time?” (Futsu)

“...No doubt about it. And then, I would be captured in some sort of barrier-looking thing, my whole body would be steadily crushed by some superhuman strength, and in the end, me together with my sword Princess Seoritsu...would be wrung into meat paste.” (Aznoval)

“...Uh, that’s quite the image.” (Futsu)

“Of course, in that time, he continued looking at me with eyes as if he wouldn’t miss any sort of opposition or obstruction as he maintained his bow locked at me, and then...a bizarre conclusion was reached. Seeing that much into the future, I decided on surrendering. Because if I let him go that far, what would be waiting after would only be bad for everyone; the worst end to it all. Nothing good would be left.” (Aznoval)

“Decisive judgement...maybe?” (Futsu)

Was that honest praise, or was it sarcasm?

Futsu looks at Aznoval’s face with a bitter and complicated expression.

“I was about to be made unable to move for half a century.” (Aznoval)

“Against a youngster that hasn’t even been here for a decade?” (Futsu)

“...That’s the part that makes it the scariest. The three this time, counting the heroes, are all a group of excelling individuals. But within them, he is a special one. He is a person that I think fearsome from the bottom of my heart.” (Aznoval)

“I agree that he is special. Even from my eyes, there’s no doubt about it. Yeah, to the point that even if we were to fill up the place with warning posters all around, it would never be enough.” (Futsu)

“Well, that’s why I brought him here ‘while at it’. I wish that he will be able to obtain some sort of experience in this place.” (Aznoval)

“Yeah, I am truly grateful. You have finally brought Makoto to my place. My request has been fulfilled without room for complaints.” (Futsu)

“I am a superb adventurer after all –is what I want to say, but this time was completely a godsend. Also, don’t call it a request. I was simply fulfilling the favor of a friend. Ah, refill for the milk please.” (Aznoval)

Feeling the warm sunlight, Aznoval spends a relaxing time.

‘Well then, over here’, with those words of invitation, the landscape

changes in an instant.

The faint red world disappeared, and what appeared was a hermitage.

She sat on the veranda, and then, looks at the woods.

There's no one else here aside from her.

“Well well, I thought I had returned to my home, but that wasn't the case. In this place, what we see, what we touch is all what you wish it for huh.”

Without making any special movements, Tomoe let out a clear sounding voice.

“Well, it is more like, this is the appearance, aspirations, scenery, and the projection of the heart that you wish for though. Doesn't look like Lorel. Could this be Japan?”

This place looked like the hermitage Tomoe had made at Asora.

And that hermitage was heavily influenced by a period drama that Tomoe really liked, where the main character had retired to and was living in.

The only thing that was clearly different about it was that in the woods you can see from the veranda, there's a conifer that has never been seen before.

“So, woman, what business do you have with me-ja?” (Tomoe)

Tomoe talks to the woman that had approached her with the appearance of a village girl from the Edo period.

Being asked her business, the village girl stopped her feet for a moment, but continuing her silence, she sits at the side of Tomoe.

Tomoe, who was sitting in the veranda, stands up.

She didn't place her hand on her katana. She simply sat back at the fireplace that was at the back.

The village girl nods once and sits opposite of Tomoe.

“Nice to meet you, I am Futsu. Aside from Root and Doma, the other

Superior Dragons don't even know of my name, a very old existence.”
(Futsu)

“You are a Superior Dragon, right? It was just recent that I heard that you and Root had an era where you were acclaimed existences in the long past.” (Tomoe)

“Close. That woman -no, he is currently a man, right. Well, whichever is fine. In the old era, it ruled over the skies and harmony, and I ruled over the land and souls.” (Futsu)

“But you incurred the wrath of Root, and as a result, you were killed or imprisoned, hence, you are now here. Was it a fight over a man? Whatever it is, what a loser-ja na.” (Tomoe)

The tone of Tomoe was calm, but there was probably displeasure and hostility mixed in it.

Because she had concluded that there's a 9/10 probability that Futsu will prove to be a harmful existence for her master.

That's because even if there have been twist and turns and in the past they couldn't let their guards down around him, Makoto and Root are temporarily in a cooperative relationship.

It would be better to have a shallow relationship with Futsu, who is clearly antagonistic towards Root.

“Yeah, it is just as you say. The biggest reason was because of a man. And so, now I am the manager of the world of the dead where I know only few.” (Futsu)

“Moreover, after several centuries, even in Lorel, the name of Doma and Futsu are being mixed up. And it will most likely fuse with Doma who actually exists.” (Tomoe)

“I am truly at a loss against the persistence of Root. But in this occasion, that's of no importance.” (Futsu)

“No importance, you say?” (Tomoe)

“That's right. My existence has already been accepted to a certain extent

by Makoto –no, by Tomoe, so the next important thing is to have you lose your hostility and cautiousness towards me.” (Futsu)

“Are you saying you want to be friends?” (Tomoe)

“...I don’t hold a grudge towards Root. I was the reason why the relationship fell apart to begin with anyways. I am not in an antagonistic relationship with him, and I don’t have any intentions of involving Tomoe’s master into our problems. I promise this.” (Futsu)

“...”

“Actually, the main guest this time is you.” (Futsu)

“...What did you say?” (Tomoe)

“I have no discontent in being the manager of this world of the dead and the souls in it, but...there’s only one thing that I regret.” (Futsu)

“The manager of the world of the dead’s regret. Doesn’t give any good vibes.” (Tomoe)

Grudge of the dead.

Associating it with that, Tomoe furrowed her eyebrows.

“Fufufu, true. When put in words, even I think it wouldn’t be anything decent.” (Futsu)

“Then...Umu, Futsu, that fight between you and Root for a man, what was it that caused your failure? If you tell me that part, I would be fine with hearing what you have to say.” (Tomoe)

Maybe Tomoe thought of something, she showed interest in Root and Futsu’s relationship and an evil smile surfaced in her face.

“Ara, that’s simple. I was unable to accept being the second wife. I wanted to be number one. And, I didn’t want other women aside from me.” (Futsu)

“...I heard that the man that was the husband of Root made a grand inner palace and shut-in there drowning in carnal desire though.” (Tomoe)

“That’s why I lost against Root who didn’t care about other women as long as she were given the chance to give birth to the child of a human.” (Futsu)

“In a place where an idiot and a retard are, if a normal one tries to join in, the normal one will be repelled huh. Even when your wish was normal and humble.” (Tomoe) <Normal is Futsuu in Japanese. Probably a play in words here.>

The face of Tomoe was showing clear amazement at it.

“I wonder about that. It is difficult for normal women to get close to heroes. And in truth, he married Root and lived a happy life...and died. The people that were loved by him left numerous children and he was wrapped in love and died in happiness. He truly had a nice face in his final moments...to the point that all of my unsightly emotions towards Root melted.” (Futsu)

“...Did you...meet him here?” (Tomoe)

The eyes that were always directed at Tomoe had for the first time looked away, and Futsu looks at the garden, answering with silence.

On the other hand, Tomoe was at a loss of words in a different meaning.

Because the experience of Futsu was the one that Tomoe had been fearing the most since the time she met Makoto.

“...Ara, I might have found an ingredient for a deal. But it might not be needed...hmm. For now, let’s leave it aside! Well then, can I finally talk about this regret I have?” (Futsu)

Maybe Futsu was aiming to blow away the heavy mood that was going on, she continues the conversation with a pretty cheerful tone.

“Umu, let’s hear it.” (Tomoe)

“I want someone to succeed the things I govern over. There’s no need to be the manager here. There have been powers that have been unused treasures for a truly...truu~ly long time. Isn’t it a waste?” (Futsu)

“What an outrageous thing to say. There’s no way a Superior Dragon can

pass over the powers they govern over.” (Tomoe)

“It is possible. Azuma, Doma, Ryuka, Grount, Lancer, and you are the proof of this. For Root and I, it is possible.” (Futsu)

“In other words...you are saying our powers are things that Root had passed onto us? Are you saying that those were originally a part of his powers?” (Tomoe)

Tomoe showed a truly displeased expression.

She didn't even show any signs of trying to hide it.

“Don't hate it that much. It already cannot be affected by Root, it is your own power now. Also...” (Futsu)

“What more is there-ja?” (Tomoe)

“Your master will in time -in a not so far future-be breaking into a domain that is the most dangerous within the Wise that have arrived to this parallel world.” (Futsu)

“...The Goddess huh.” (Tomoe)

“So it goes without saying. At that time, it wouldn't be troubling to have as much power as possible, right?” (Futsu)

The curtains of silence fall.

Futsu waits for the answer of Tomoe.

It was a silence as if everything that had to be said had already been spoken.

Tomoe thinks; about Futsu's aim, wish, and what she is plotting.

The silence continued for long.

Chapter 289: Dragon Mother, Dragon Pulse; Succession

‘Well then, over here’, the landscape changed instantly without even giving me the chance to nod.

Under a sky that doesn’t have a single cloud in the sky, the sides and up and down were surrounded by deep darkness.

The presence of Azu-san and Tomoe has disappeared.

I was the only one who was separated?

But I didn’t feel hostility from that dragon that called itself Futsu.

It doesn’t seem to be an attack.

I don’t know how the world of the dead works, so I am troubled by what to do.

I can’t see anything aside from my own body.

No matter where I look, it is the same.

I also don’t feel as if something is hiding or erasing its presence and observing me. Not being able to grasp a presence at all is exactly how this feels.

...Well, it would be a different matter if this were a world where people like Rokuya are all around the place though.

“It took me a bit of time to prepare. Sorry for making a guest of mine wait.”

A voice reverberated in my head, and the snake-like dragon from just a while ago was floating in front of my eyes.

What, so it didn’t go to change or transform huh.

“How tasteless. So I am in this form.” (Futsu)

No well, you are the one that presented yourself in that figure.

Even I find it rare to be in a place like this where there’s nothing.

If you want to change your appearance, just go change it yourself. If you are an incredible dragon, something of that level shouldn't be hard.

"I was the one who was told 'well then, over here', so receiving that impression of yours troubles me though." (Makoto) "...Right, sorry. I am currently entertaining the three of you in different places, so I tried my best so that the space were to recreate the place you wished for, but it looks like I made a mistake somewhere." (Futsu) "Wished for?" (Makoto)

But there's nothing here though.

"Aznoval is in a forest that shines brilliantly with life, and Tomoe seems to be in a place of retirement in seclusion. In that case, this might be the kind of place that your heart finds respite in..." (Futsu) "Stop it. That makes me feel kind of sad." (Makoto)

I felt like I was told my imagination was abysmal, and that made me sad.

Not only that, it was vexing.

If at least some stars were shining here, it would have turned into a starry sky.

There really is nothing here.

"In this world of the dead that serves as the temporary residence of the souls, their outer appearance and landscape can be changed as much as one wants. That's why the landscape that the souls wish for spreads in this land here and there, and in the cases when living beings like you guys visit it, I can change its look to a certain extent. For example, like this." (Futsu) The words of Futsu stop, and then, right in front of me, a plain chair and table appeared as if it had risen from the darkness.

Wow.

"So you can create things as much as you want huh. That's impressive." (Makoto) This probably means she wants me to take a seat, so I do so.

I could clearly feel how the seat received my weight at my back.

"It is completely different from Creation. Please view it similarly to the one your follower Tomoe uses, where she temporarily provides substance

to her illusions.” (Futsu) “Tomoe’s... I see.” (Makoto)

I do know that Tomoe has obtained the ability to grant substance to her illusions.

If it is in battle, there’s absolutely no problem at all, but to use it in daily life situation, the bottleneck is that it is a power that can only be used for a short period of time. When Tomoe is silver haired, she obtains the ability to strengthen the vague sensation of the boundary between reality and void.

“The invitation to come here was mainly for Tomoe. I thought about having you give your opinions regarding this, so I asked you to come along as well.” (Futsu) “Business with Tomoe?” (Makoto)

Oho, looks like this is not good.

Feels like I will have to be cautious.

The other party is an existence that stood on par with Root.

Just what kind of unreasonable request will it be asking my important aide for.

“Yeah. Aznoval said that this might serve as a mood-changer for you too. Of course, I will be lending my help in that aspect. If you want to learn about this world, experience it, and on top of that, there’s something you want to ask about, I promise you to answer whatever you want.” (Futsu) ... Even if you tell me that...

The world of the dead and things about souls; I might have a lot of things to ask about that unknown and mysterious topic, but...what about things I myself want to ask about?

As I thought, the thing that bothers me the most is regarding Tomoe.

She is an important family member after all.

...Family huh.

Now that I think about it, using that as an excuse, I have done something cruel to Mio. And I might have hurt Tomoe as well with it.

That's probably why she broke so grandly when the talk about children was brought out.

Regarding Mio, there's also the issue with Rokuya-san and... damn it.

When I leave here and return to Tsige, I must resolve myself properly regarding that matter.

Leaving aside the other matters, I have already reached an answer regarding those two a long time ago after all.

"It is true that this is an important experience, and a chance. But right now, the thing I am the most interested about is what you plan on having Tomoe do. There's no other thing that bothers me aside from that."

(Makoto) "There's no need for you to worry. Not only do I currently not have the power to hurt you, I don't possess the power to hurt the current Tomoe either." (Futsu) "This is the world of the dead, right? When I was told that, it reminded of many old stories and myths. For example; an existence that had been semi-imprisoned in this world and was searching for someone to take its place and tried to deceive that person into it."

(Makoto) "That's a myth passed down between the Wise -between Japanese people huh. Ah, I see. It is true that this place has a number of rules that are unique to this place alone, but I don't have any plans on leaving this place, you know. That's why, when I learned about Tomoe's existence, I thought about calling her here. I asked this of Aznoval, but I didn't think it would be fulfilled so soon." (Futsu) "I don't understand what you are trying to say. I also don't understand at all why you are aiming for Tomoe. Those words didn't serve much in erasing my suspicions." (Makoto) "Fufu. In terms of binding the living to this place, well, putting it in an easy to understand way, there's one that states that you can do it by having them eat food of this world while they are in this world." (Futsu) See?

In the stories I know of, most of them are basically like that too.

Most of the myths I only know about them roughly, but the times the world of the dead appear in the story, they are mostly because they wish to revive a specific important someone. And in those kind of stories, it is

filled with traps like: 'don't drink, don't eat, don't turn back, don't open your eyes'.

She easily revealed it, but it looks like this place really does have those kind of rules.

“...As I thought. Owa?!” (Makoto)

A short mutter leaks out from my mouth.

As if using my conviction as a signal, Futsu's figure shrinks to a size similar to that of mine.

'Ooh, in this size, even Dragons are cute', is the stupid thing I was thinking when a broadleaf tree, which wasn't too big, sprouted at the side of Futsu. It blossomed, withered, and stays in a form in between yellow and orange and a number of colorful fruits had sprouted from it.

It looked like tangerines.

“For example, if you were to eat the fruits -that are called Golden Apples by Aznoval-here in this place, your mind and body will be powerfully bound to this side, and even if you try to leave, it would take quite a lot of time and work.” (Futsu) <TLN: ときじく not really sure of this one. Just found the closest one that fit the description which can be the Golden Apples or the Peaches of Immortality -might be something more obscure though.> Golden Apples.

I remember hearing about it. If I remember correctly, eating it would grant you immortality?

Eh, or was it longevity? Heal diseases? Or was it simply a symbol of eternity?

Crap, it is incredibly vague.

I feel like it had a longer name than that.

But why did he put a name like that to a thing that would entrap you in the world of the dead?

That's a fruit that would imprison you in this side forever.

“Golden Apples huh. I remember hearing that name in myths.”
(Makoto) “Must be. He said that he used that as a reference. About those Golden Apples, if you were to bring them to the outside world and have a living being eat it, they can obtain an immortal body. If you want to, please take a few with you.” (Futsu) Is that why.

“I don’t need a single one of them.” (Makoto)

“With a person that holds this kind of landscape inside of them, I did think that you would be saying that, but to think you would answer instantly. From what I heard, you are supposed to be a merchant. I don’t think there’s any article that would make you as much profit than this, you know.” (Futsu) “No need to mind it.” (Makoto)

“Understood. I won’t force you. Fufufu, but really, you...” (Futsu)

“...What is it?” (Makoto)

“I simply thought that the Goddess and Root must be having quite the hard time with you. I personally don’t like the two of them, so from my point of view peeking at you from this side, you are the best. Please do drag them around to the brim of their patience. Yeah, without any restraint -thoroughly.” (Futsu) I could tell that the cute-looking Futsu in front of me was laughing in an evil way.

So even if she doesn’t have any plans on revenge, she doesn’t hold that much of a good impression towards the Goddess and Root huh.

She says she doesn’t like them, but in truth, she probably actually hates them to the core. Yeah.

“...*Cough*, a bit of resent got mixed in there, but I personally am looking forward to what you will be achieving in the future. That’s why I have no intentions of imprisoning you here, and I also have no intentions of stealing your important companion, Tomoe. What I wish from Tomoe is...to transfer my power.” (Futsu) “Transfer your power?” (Makoto)

Even when she has told me, I don’t understand the meaning.

Is there a reason why she wants to get weaker?

“For someone like me who passes her days managing souls, the past powers that are still inside this body of mine are a waste of a treasure. To be more specific, it is the strongest power of I, who was called Mother Earth Silver Dragon, ‘Dragon Mother’.” (Futsu) “Mother Earth Silver Dragon...Dragon Mother?” (Makoto)

Now that she mentions it, when I pour a lot of my power to Tomoe, her hair turns silver.

Is there a connection to that?

Also, what kind of power is Dragon Mother to begin with?

“I have already said this before, but I have no intentions of binding Tomoe. ‘Dragon Mother’ is a power that is related to the nucleus of life. It is difficult to explain it in words, and it would be best to understand it from intuition and experience. Hm...Azu...I see. I understand.” (Futsu)
Hm?

It looks like Futsu’s mind is currently not here right now.

From how she is talking, it seems as if she is thinking about something.

It feels like the times when someone is having a talk in thought transmission.

...Ah, could it be that Futsu is currently speaking with all three of us at the same time?

If that’s the case, she is quite skilled.

Having a conversation with three people separately at the same time; just thinking about it makes me confused.

Anyways, Futsu, who is most likely concentrating on her conversation with Azu-san, seems to be gentle.

It is pretty different from her attitude towards me that is as if she is receiving a guest.

It must be true that Azu-san and his group are in a close relationship with Futsu.

“I’m sorry about that. I received a small advice just now.” (Futsu) “No, I don’t really mind.” (Makoto)

“About the power of ‘Dragon Mother’, putting it plainly, it is a power that lets you understand the world’s dragon pulse and utilize them.” (Futsu) World’s dragon pulse. <Ryuummyaku>

Like the Ley-lines.

Even if you tell me that, I only know that it is like the energy of the earth. I am not knowledgeable about feng shui or things of that matter.

Did Azu-san think I would be able to understand with this?

It is true that this gave me a clearer image in that part about nucleus of life though.

“Regarding the part about comparing it to this so called ‘Dragon Pulse’, I would also like to ask Aznoval about that later, but putting it in a different way, it is like the fossilization of the soul of all things. Because of the result of something that’s similar to friction produced in the moment when the souls come and go from that side to this side, at the depths of the whole world, there’s a mass of power that flows like a river and— no, as I thought, it really is difficult to explain.” (Futsu) “...You are saying that Tomoe has the ability to utilize this?” (Makoto) “I certainly did feel it. From the current Superior Dragons, the only ones that can obtain this specialty are Tomoe or Root. And for a certain reason, it is impossible for Root. Also, seeing Tomoe with silver hair, I was convinced.” (Futsu) “By accepting it, will it forcefully affect Tomoe’s position and personality in some way?” (Makoto) “No. I ascertain this. Strictly speaking, this is like an access permission of sorts. It will be done in an instant.” (Futsu) “...”

In reality, it sounds like a sweet deal.

She says that she will be giving power for free, so it is extraordinarily sweet.

But you know...no matter how much you don’t like the Goddess and Root, would she really go to such lengths?

“From what I see, you are seriously intending on confronting that God.

In that case, the power of 'Dragon Mother' should serve to protect Tomoe. Even if Tomoe wishes for it, if you as her master rejects it, it is impossible to transfer the power. Can you please give me the answer? What do you think about it?" (Futsu) "If there's no demerit at all. In my personal opinion, I want Tomoe to get stronger. BUT! If she herself doesn't wish for it, it is a definite no. That's my conclusion." (Makoto) "Okay. You guys have a nice relationship formed there. That scarily powerful Spirit, and the hyuman corpse that has obtained growth are probably the same as Tomoe. I am slightly jealous." (Futsu) "..."

Spirit and Corpse.

Tamaki's existence hasn't been noticed by even the Goddess, so...is she talking about Mio and Shiki?

I somewhat understand about Shiki, but is Mio categorized as a Spirit? Not in the Calamity category?

"Tomoe said the same thing. That if it will serve to protect you and sweep away your uneasiness, she would want as much power as possible. But she also said that if it is something you don't wish for, she will not put a single finger on it." (Futsu) "..."

That Tomoe, she sometimes says really admirable things.

I seriously am only blessed by people.

"Understood. Tomoe will be taking that 'Dragon Mother' power. But, when something abnormal happens..." (Makoto) I definitely won't forgive you.

"You definitely won't forgive me, right? I know. I was sure you would say that. As I thought, you really do resemble him. It is vexing, but I understand why Root is so stuck onto you." (Futsu) "If you understand... that's good." (Makoto)

Honestly, receiving power for free in a state where I still can't trust the other party completely, is something that I don't really want to do much. It doesn't feel good.

Even so, thinking about the battle with the Goddess that will be coming

in time, it wouldn't be bad to have the others aside from me also gain a lot of powers.

“Ah right, if you are thinking that it doesn't feel good to receive power for free...” (Futsu) “Hm?”

As if seeing through my heart, Futsu speaks.

Is my way of thinking that similar to this guy she is talking about?

I don't think I am similar to a guy that would take Root as his bride though.

“Can you please take care of the trouble in Kannaoi? About that matter, if we were to trace it to its origin, it is a fight that stems from their love for their country and territory. That's why, you should be able to take care of it even through their tricks. It is originally something that I wouldn't be getting involved with, but thanks to one of the two royalties that the Goddess has bestowed being up to no good...things have gotten quite complicated.” (Futsu) “Royalties? Are you talking about the charm eye?” (Makoto)

What does she mean by ‘the royalty that the Goddess has bestowed’?

That's the power of Tomoki's demonic eye, and that's certainly something that the Goddess bestowed upon him but...

“The power that the Goddess has bestowed to the heroes is royalty conferment. A strong body and magic power, also a power that is fitting for them as rulers has been selected and manifested. I don't know how she explained it to them, and that's something only the person herself knows though.” (Futsu) “...”

“The Goddess has invited two heroes. The likes of the Goddess are biased, and the power of the sacred treasures she gave them may have differences, but it seems like the power they obtained is pretty similar.” (Futsu) “So that's a part of their power huh...” (Makoto)

“Without meeting each other, without speaking with each other, without being in contact with each other; a disgusting thing to see and touch that has the power to cut into pieces the bonds between people and capsize it.

In this Lorel, in this country that loves Wise, there's no need for this disease." (Futsu) "It is true that I did think badly of it since it was something done by a Japanese person." (Makoto) I didn't think the charm power would evolve into such a way of using after all.

"Of course, I will have the Adventurers of Origin cooperate as well. But they have a limit in how much they can intervene, so I want to ask of you - who lives in the present-to bring a close to this." (Futsu) ...Could it be she also knows about my relationship with Iroha-chan?

If Rokuya-san has told her about it via Azu-san, it might be possible.

But if the Adventurers of Origin can't stand at the front stage of history and are trying to reduce their influence to it, even if it is possible, it is most likely impossible for them to solve the problem.

...Right.

A happy ending where everyone views the dawn with a smile doesn't exist. That includes matters where a country has turned muddy.

There's people who wish to reach even if it's only a bit better of a conclusion, and without minding the amount, they do their best without sparing any effort.

And, I know about that girl to a certain extent.

That eager figure of hers.

"I will be telling you this in advance. It is not certain that it will reach the conclusion that you wish for, you know?" (Makoto) "I am already aware of that. Many lives will most likely come here. But that's also the usual. I won't blame you for that." (Futsu) "In that case, as an honorarium for giving power to Tomoe, I will try to do as much as I can." (Makoto) It makes me feel more relaxed when it is a work that has a reward after all.

"Your arrival to Kannaoui probably made the issue proceed in an accelerated manner. Revolts will most likely be occurring in the towns at the vicinity. Please go at it at your own discretion." (Futsu) Leaving an ominous prognostic, the darkness is wiped, and returned to the previous landscape where Azu-san and Tomoe are also in.

Well, it doesn't matter whatever it is.

At a glance, it doesn't look like Tomoe has changed, and Azu-san is probably the same.

Mio and the others are probably waiting, so this is a good time.

Let's return to the world of the living.

There's no traps, right? We can return, right?

Chapter 290: Interlude – In the middle of the night

The Osakabe household that has been ruling over Kannaoui for a long time, and there has been worries that they have been shouldering for that same amount of time.

-For example; Yaso-Katsui's Grand Labyrinth.

It existed way before the Osakabe household, got a name for itself, and it was an unexplored labyrinth that was older than even the city of Kannaoui.

It was said to be the place where a Superior Dragon lives, and at times, it would spit out a crazy amount of mamonos that would bring forth heavy damage to the settlements.

But in peaceful times, because of the adventurers that the labyrinth attracts, it becomes a big blessing. It was like an abundant large river that isn't rare when it overflows.

Even when it is dangerous, people still find worth in gathering there after all.

Learning how to utilize it well will be a subject that the city of Kannaoui will probably be racking their brains about for a long time.

-For example; the military department known as the Ikusabe household.

In the past, they were only one, but at some point in time, they fought, competed, and now, even the word hate feels like a lukewarm word to describe their antagonistic relationship.

Their names changed, the lands they governed over were separated, and the master they worked under also changed.

At present, the core of the territory is the Osakabe household, but the master the military family serves under and the treatment they receive is better.

In general, the military family possesses more power.

Of course, this isn't a situation that the Osakabe would like.

-For example; the bloodline of the main household.

Most of the current people of Kannaoi had weaker bodies than that of the general populace.

Even if they raise a family head with care, it is rare for them to live long. To the point that there was a time when they thought this was the work of a curse from some antagonistic power. <the work of an enemy stand!>

That answer has not been found even to this current day.

At any rate, if they were to try to maintain their bloodline to a certain degree of thickness, it makes it that much easier for the child to be born with a weak body.

It was the biggest dilemma of the Osakabe household.

But for some reason, there would be many in the group of people with thick blood that were talented, and there were many who would be revered to as a lord by many.

And so, magic, medicine, and the many experiments to better the constitution of the body were serious matters that the people that serve the Osakabe household couldn't ignore.

Ironically, to this current day, the one who possesses the best healing properties in Lorel Union is the Osakabe household.

Even though they can't save themselves, others ask them for salvation; it was already comical in their eyes.

In that history of the Osakabe household shouldering this complicated circumstances, there's the vassals that have been serving them for generations.

The Kougetsu and Shougetsu brothers also originate from a military family and serve their master.

The older brother Kougetsu received training for the gifted as a warrior and a tactician in his homeland, and protected the household straightforwardly.

The younger brother, Shougetsu, after experiencing being an adventurer and travelling around the world, he supported the household from the shadows as a stealth corps member.

In time, the younger brother would learn all about the conflict between the households and the sad circumstances behind it, and would retire into being the protegee of a princess at a place that was faraway from the center of this conflict.

On the other hand, his older brother stayed at this center...and decided on reformation.

No, what was in his heart was not something that would so gentle as to call reformation.

Revolution or maybe rebellion would be words that would be more accurate.

“With this, things should progress faster. Now that we know the Kuzunoha Company that Sairitz invited surpasses my forecast by so much, it makes it questionable just how much that fox of a woman knows about the situation. The speed in which the plan of Haruka progresses is not enough.”

In the room of Kougetsu, unable to obtain any decent sleep, Kougetsu was measuring the effectiveness of the moves he made in order to make adjustments.

In the scenario that was in his head, there's the woman that wouldn't be an exaggeration to call the one who holds the most authority in Lorel, Sairitz.

A resident of the political world that possesses power fitting to be called Empress.

This woman, that still has the card of marriage remaining, was being glared by all the people in the domestic affairs and diplomatic area of Naoi.

And the move she made was the Kuzunoha Company.

On the other hand, the move of Kougetsu was the Empire's hero, Tomoki, and the brave woman of Osakabe, Haruka.

But those cards of his are not functioning in the way he wishes to.

Leaving aside if the scenario of everything functioning properly actually leading to success, this was creating impatience in Kougetsu. On top of that, the achievements of the Kusunoha Company in the labyrinth, and them meeting with Osakabe Iroha.

The deciding move to reform Kannaoi and the Osakabe household, he couldn't manage to reach that point for some reason.

Even though it is so close.

He has remained in obscurity for so long for the sake of that.

Enlarging the power that gathers under Haruka, the immense power of the charm ability of the Empire's hero that has joined into his playing cards, and also, the existence of Sairitz and the Kusunoha Company.

Until now, he has been careful and calm, without hurrying no matter what.

Kougetsu, who has been advancing his plans at a decent pace, made one move hurriedly.

In order to move Iroha's mother -Haruka-a bit faster, an action that was solely for the sake of speeding up the whole of his plan was made.

But that was...a mistake.

Kougetsu understood the mysterious area of the Grand Labyrinth called Alternative Floor, and yet, the Kusunoha Company proceeded their exploration at breakneck speed, and he was scared of Sairitz' shadow that stood at their back, which made him hurry.

Even though he is not a religious person, he had gone to the Kishimo temple that he has already grown used to going to, and in that underground where Haruka and a number of her vassals were, he whispered them something.

"The Kusunoha Company -especially their representative Raidou-seems

to be mutual enemies of the Empire hero, Iwahashi Tomoki”, is what he said.

Kougetsu’s miscalculation was just one thing.

He completely underestimated the power of those words. He thought that those words would serve as a trigger. He was expecting it to become an ingredient to make the preliminary battle shorter. He thought it would simply be like putting coal into the fire.

But in truth, it was heavily different.

Those words were a bomb in itself.

Without the requirement of a preliminary battle, those explosive words of his would create a grand explosion.

Only a few days left until its effectiveness becomes a movement.

If it were just that, it would actually be as he wished.

But just by learning that Raidou was an enemy of Tomoki, even the Shadowless tried to kill Raidou the moment they found him.

The moves of the charmed people was something that easily surpassed the imagination of Kougetsu.

But here, there’s one more misfortune.

The woman called Haruka is considered a top-class warrior even when looking back at the history of the Osakabe household. And that power of will is also on the level of a Brave.

That’s why she didn’t become a simple puppet of Tomoki, and was still able to act as a leader.

Her maddened love and her tenacious will had fused into the worst combination.

It was as if she had no lingering feelings towards the man she loved and her own daughter, and was devoted to following her desire of acting for the sake of Tomoki.

She knows about ethics and common sense, but she doesn’t feel worth;

all of her decision standards are based on her love to a man she has never met before.

If it is for his sake, she has no problems with doing things that are not allowed to do in society –that is the current Haruka.

Kougetsu has been evaluating the power of the charm all this time, and still hasn't evaluated the woman called Haruka.

With the piling of this small doubts, a misfortunate coincidence occurred.

Kougetsu will learn in the worst possible way that the woman known as Haruka that he had seen as an ideal hero was nowhere to be found anymore.

“Kougetsu-sama!!”

“What?! You are being noisy!” (Kougetsu)

“Forgive my rudeness, but this is an emergency!! We have received a report from the patrol!! A mysterious group is trying to do a night raid at the Chihiro-Manrai Restaurant!”

“...What? What...did you just say?” (Kougetsu)

“A night raid at Chihiro-Manrai Restaurant!! We have formed a suppression team and are on the way, but the enemy is powerful!! Moreover, this may not be information that has been 100% confirmed, but there are people that said they saw the figure of the missing Haruka-sama there too!!”

“...Impossible.” (Kougetsu)

Kougetsu unconsciously stepped back.

The surprise of the man after hearing about Haruka, the anger of allowing the attackers to the center area where the Chihiro-Manrai restaurant is; these supposed factors made it seem like the stepping back of Kougetsu was a natural reaction, but the truth was different.

He finally understood the mistake in the move he made.

He didn't understand just what kind of meaning it held for the charmed people to learn about an enemy of Tomoki.

And he didn't understand just how they would act when they had obtained plenty enough fighting power.

Haruka, who is not simply a fighting puppet but a person that can investigate on her own and is able to make flexible decisions in a sense. After investigating the information of the actual Raidou and Tomoki, she had begun preparations with a face of wrath.

It is true that the Chihiro-Manrai restaurant is a facility that possesses high security and defenses, but the preparations of theirs had already surpassed that.

This wasn't an attack; this was practically a war.

Forming groups of skilled adventurers, warriors, and stealth corps, and on top of that, having Haruka take the command position herself.

"We are currently putting the confirmation of the situation as our top priority!! The customers that are staying there have already begun evacuating with the guidance of the hotel personnel, and the defense unit has already been dispatched! We should cooperate with the unit and make a pincer attack to settle the situation and..."

This was too soon.

This isn't how it should have been.

They have not suppressed the information line at all.

At this rate, information that a large scale fight has occurred in Kannaoui will spread in the blink of an eye.

There's already no way to stop it at this late of a stage.

Now that it has come to this, Sairitz can use this battle and call it an insurrection, and declare doubts on their political management, letting her use that as an excuse to put official troops or a military family in Kannaoui.

Thinking of the worst, the future that they use the confusion to take away Kannaoui from the Osakabe household to give it to a military family

is also possible.

Against an opponent that they would normally not want to show a single opening against, they have shown a completely conspicuous opening, and hence, a fatal mistake.

The fall of the Osakabe household.

Whichever it is, they are all things that Kougetsu doesn't wish for.

He wishes for a strong and accomplished Osakabe household after all.

He wants to make Kannaoi which is the place that the Osakabe household rules over to be the number one most flourishing city in Lorel.

To the point that he would use the descendants of a family lineage that has lost themselves to their grief of their body.

"Haruka...you bastard. Don't joke around. Are you telling me that in order to kill the enemy of a foreign country's hero, you don't care about what will happen to the city you have been born in and your household?"
(Kougetsu)

"Kougetsu-sama?"

"...I will be going too. How is the evacuation state at the surroundings of the Chihiro-Manrai restaurant?! Send a messenger!! Try your best to reduce the casualties to the residents as much as possible! If it is the units that are permanently staying in that hotel, just them alone should be able to fight decently. We will be prioritizing the protection of the citizens!!"
(Kougetsu)

"Yes, sir!!"

"I won't let you do it. I definitely won't accept a conclusion like this! Haruka, what's the point of you moving on Sairitz interest?!" (Kougetsu)

After the person reporting had left, Kougetsu shouted as he hurriedly proceeded with the preparations.

He was completely dismayed.

As if his own pawns had turned onto himself; they are creating scenarios

that are working in the favor of his opponent.

A countermeasure against it has still not appeared in his mind.

But he absolutely cannot ignore it.

The trump card that he has been hiding has been exposed, and the charm power will probably be discovered as well.

Even so, there's no way he can give up.

He has been living for the sake of creating a strong Osakabe after all.

The Kannaoui citizens will be killed by the military of Kannaoui.

That is a scenario that cannot be forgiven.

Because the military is an existence that is supposed to protect the citizens after all.

Devoting himself to plot scheming for a long time, Kougetsu had also been estranged from swinging a sword in battle.

And now, he will be taking the sword after all this time.

Ironically, it is in order to protect the citizens of Kannaoui from the result of his own plans.



“A battle in Kannaoui, you say?”

Sairitz, who heard of this report in Naoi, had stopped reading her documents and lifted her head.

“Yes. They are apparently doing a night raid at Chihiro-Manrai Restaurant. The troops of the Osakabe household have been dispatched and are cooperating with the defense unit of the hotel.”

The one reporting this had an attire that was easy to tell that this middle-aged man was a stealth corps member.

Surprisingly, they had a grasp of the information of a faraway place at practically real-time.

They must have quite the surveillance in that city, or maybe this is the

result of excelling information gathering skills.

This time, it was the former.

The information gathering skills of Lorel are indeed growing by the year, though it may be a different story if it were a neighboring settlement, but the more the distance, the lower the accuracy of the information is.

Then, why did they have such surveillance prepared?

It is not because they felt a strange atmosphere from Kannaoui, or because the Osakabe household was showing strange movements, nor was it because the Empire was interfering in a suspicious manner.

It is because there's a guest that Sairitz had invited herself staying there.

"I see. No matter how it rolls, it won't change the fact that this will serve in our favor." (Sairitz)

If it were the usual, Sairitz would be having a wide smile in the face of this overwhelming luck, but she still maintained her calm expression.

"Yes."

"And, what about them?" (Sairitz)

"A few of them have gone to the labyrinth since morning, and it seems like a number of their personnel are in standby at the hotel. We still haven't grasped the information on the inside, but we do know that the hotel personnel is evacuating the people."

"Marito, make gathering information of them as the highest priority. Also, contact the site. Do your best to provide them support. No matter what they ask of us, don't refuse. I will do something about it, so accept anything. Understood?" (Sairitz)

"I will contact them as soon as possible. How should we move after?" (Marito)

"...No need to." (Sairitz)

"Hah?"

"We do nothing. Only in the case where the Kuzunoha Company

requests for our help will we do our all to execute anything. Right...if there's extra hands, help out in the evacuation and rescue of the citizens.”
(Sairitz)

“...Uhm, I know this may be me overstepping my bounds but...can I ask what we will be doing regarding the way we will deal with the Osakabe?”
(Marito)

An unbelievable chance has fallen in front of them.

It should be completely impossible to not do anything.

Thinking this, Marito mixed slight self-interest as he urged an answer from his master.

This may be an opportunity to finally reach a conclusion to the long history between the military family and the Osakabe household, so it can't be helped that he would lose a bit of his composure.

“Didn't I say we won't be doing anything? Marito, it is not like I don't know about the antagonism between your military family and them, but... hold it down. Right now in that city, there's the tails of a dragon and a tiger that we can't step on. Listen well. If we were to step into this matter thoughtlessly...all the military family will be wiped out, you know.”
(Sairitz)

“Y-You jest.” (Marito)

“I am as serious as I can be. Because of the encounter between Iroha and the Kuzunoha Company, the situation has changed into an abnormally delicate and dangerous matter. The representative Raidou-sama, who is staying there, is the one that is working as the teacher of your son, Izumo, at Rotsgard.” (Sairitz)

“.....”

“By the time you meet him again, that child should have definitely become stronger than you. Raidou is the kind of man that possesses that much achievements to even accomplish something like that as a teacher in his spare time. That's why, don't place your personal feelings in this occasion and just watch over it. This is an important test case.” (Sairitz)

“I admit the matter with Izumo. He is several steps better than me. But I am not planning on being overcome for at least 10 to 15 years though... I understand. If it is okay, can I hear about the meaning of the words ‘test case’?” (Marito)

“Just how will they react when attacked directly? Just how will Raidou-sama see the approaching danger to his comrades, and how will he move? In Rotsgard, there was that big of an incident, and yet, it looked as if he viewed it as not his problem after all. That’s what I meant.” (Sairitz)

“Thank you very much. Well then, we will be doing our job as eyes, if there’s spare hand, we will rescue and assist the citizens, and in the case that the Kuzunoha Company requests our help, we will do our all to fulfill it.” (Marito)

“Then, step out. Also, there’s no need to hold back regarding this matter. Come report to me whenever.” (Sairitz)

“Understood. Well then, I will be excusing myself.” (Marito)

Marito’s figure disappears.

The only one that remained was Sairitz who had a complicated expression in her face.

The reason for that expression was because she has been unable to process the many changes since the time she invited them to her country.

“A perfume that possesses the charm power, the inside fight of the Osakabe household, the many testimonies of people that say have witnessed the Adventurers of Origin: Aznoval, Rokuya, Ginebia, Haku Mokuren. The representative of the Kuzunoha Company and a temporary teacher at Rotsgard Academy, Raidou. To think he would be such a potent medicine.” (Sairitz)

It would have been fine if they were to just do something about the problematic group of mercenaries that were carefreely shut deep underground in Lorel without minding about political influence.

The existence of Picnic Rosegarden may be popular inside the country, but in terms of the outside, they have a side that is slightly difficult to

handle.

For Sairitz, they are an existence that she would prefer if they were to enter the control of the country, or just disappear.

If they were to be lend for the war between Aion and Tsige, their name won't be heard in a bad light by the foreign countries royalties, nobles, and merchants for a while.

Of course, she made this proposition to the Rembrandt Company with the premise that they will provide plenty enough fighting strength to have an active participation in Tsige. Sadly, it was obviously not a proposition that was purely out of goodwill.

But the Kuzunoha Company easily surpassed the expectations of Sairitz, and have made big accomplishments that they didn't even mean to.

In the end, the diplomatic negotiations and the domestic affairs' undercover moves she was planning on proceeding with had been stopped almost completely.

Thinking about what would have happened if this were in the city of Naoi, and it involved her and the Priestess, the heart of Sairitz felt slight pity towards Kannaoui and the Osakabe household.

But because of the many new tasks that were piling up like a mountain due to this, all that pity had dispersed without lasting even a few minutes though.

“Now then, I wonder what kind of conclusion it will bring about. The dirty plan of the Empire, the darkness of Kannaoui, and they have also dug out the legends of Lorel splendidly. Really, if possible, I would have wanted to enjoy this story as a spectator.” (Sairitz)

With half expectations and half fear, the Empress of Lorel didn't take off her tired expression as she extended her hand to the remaining documents.

Chapter 291: The third time a city burns

“Why is it that when Boss is involved, everywhere becomes a haunted city?!” (Lime)

The unrestrained shout of Lime reverberates in the corridors.

He was simply supposed to be waiting for the return of his superior in Kannaoui -no, in the super high-class hotel of Lorel that is famous for its safety.

It was a lot safer of an environment than the time when he came to this country on his own, and the only thing he had to do was babysitting.

For a sudden call, it wasn't that hard of a job.

But right now...the Kuzunoha Company employee and spy, Lime Latte, was being exposed to even more danger than the time when he had come to this place, moreover, when he was camping at the forest.

It was an unit that was not only completely armed, the people that comprised it all had dangerous eyes like those of fanatics.

A group of people that were a lot more troublesome and dangerous than the run-off-the-mill mamonos.

It was a bit after dusk, at the time when the night activities were about to begin.

Thinking about the security of the city and thinking about the special nature of this hotel, the possibility of being attacked is practically none.

Lime that had gotten used to his job as spy judged as so, and was looking forward to his fried rice for dinner.

The quick mobilization of the Chihiro Manrai restaurant was great and succeeded in intercepting the attack, and their ability to evacuate the guests to safety was also perfect.

Then, why was Lime in such a tense state?

Because he noticed that the movements of the insurgents were clearly aiming at Lime's group -more specifically, the party of Osakabe Iroha that

was in the same room as him.

On top of that, there's also the fact that the insurgents were comprised of strong people.

This was a night raid.

Meaning that, now that they have been intercepted, the attackers will become the ones in a disadvantage. That's how it is supposed to be, and yet, the morale of the insurgents has not fallen.

The whole unit was reorganized swiftly, and with their morale still intact, there's a unit that is trying to aim for the head of Iroha.

Lime wanting to hold his head in pain was understandable.

If it were just running away, it would be easy for him, but right now, he has to protect Iroha along with his colleagues.

It is of course difficult to command an escape with a group of people. There's also several people intercepting them. The enemies are many.

Even if it's the Kuzunoha Company, the situation is not good.

"Tch!! Those bastards have already caught wind of us!" (Lime)

His ability to sense presences that he polished as a spy have told him that several presences have begun to move as a group towards them.

He quickly made eye contact with his demi-human coworkers, had Iroha and the others go ahead as if drawing the attention to them, and with his hand, he communicates with signs and forms a rear guard.

"Until Boss returns, I won't let a single one of them get injured!" (Lime)

"I don't know what they are trying to do, but they got quite the guts to pick a fight with us!! If they are boring humans, I will crush them without reservation!"

The first one to respond to the shout of Lime was the only scylla in the Kuzunoha Company, Levi.

After being a failure at the snowy mountains, she polished her strength even more, and was internally happy that she had gotten a job.

For Levi, who has the prime objective of pursuing fights and power, this job that was everyday duty training for the people that leave to the outside of Asora was slightly boring.

The sudden call made her expectant about what it was about, so for her, this turn of events was right in her alley.

The two take a battle stance at the hostile presences that were swiftly approaching.

Since he made protecting the target and escaping the hotel as the highest priority, the only ones staying there were those two.

“...Ara, a miss. This is strange. I thought there was no mistake it was here though.”

(This is bad...) (Lime)

The clear voice of a woman.

A woman appeared from the door that turned into ashes without a single sound.

By the way, what was resounding in the area were the sounds of the activated traps that Lime and the Chihiro Manrai restaurant set up in the garden.

Lime, who had heard her voice and the sounds, had both his instincts and reason screaming of danger.

Having accumulated battle experience with Tomoe as his master, Lime had felt danger from this woman that was completely armed as military of the Lorel Union.

It felt the same as the time when he witnessed the power of the hero, or even more than that.

“Hey, unfamiliar people. My daughter Iroha, where is she?”

“ ... ”

“...This woman is the best.” (Levi)

Lime stiffens his face.

If what she was releasing was the bloodthirst of a mother trying to take back her daughter, it would be something normal.

But that wasn't the case.

The woman in front of them was releasing unrestrained bloodthirst and hostility towards Lime and Levi with love that was not for her child but for a different someone, while she was quietly laughing.

Putting it in other words, it is ugly.

That's why Lime maintained silence and simply took a stance with his sword while holding the highest of cautiousness.

On the other hand, Levi had a dangerous smile surface on her face at the strong aura of that woman and evaluated her as the best opponent to fight against.

Scyllas hate humans instinctively.

'It is similar to how some people can't physiologically stand cockroaches', is how Makoto described it, but it is probably something that is at least several times more than that.

It is not a repudiation that makes them want to avoid them, it is a repudiation that makes them want to kill them all, so it is quite the instinctive reaction.

In the case of the current Levi, it is limited to only humans that have the label of 'strong', but the instinct itself is still kicking in her.

And in front of her, there's a suitable enemy.

With a woman that is worth killing right in front of her, Lime was looking at the Levi that had a smile he hadn't seen before.

(Whichever the dice rolls huh. Well, in terms of numbers, there's several tens of them, but everyone aside from that woman seems to not be that big of a deal, and on our side there's the two of us. If it comes to worst, we just have to wait for Boss to return and things should settle one way or another.) (Lime)

Lime looks at the situation positively.

There's no need to pointlessly kill the enemy.

'We should make them reveal as many playing cards they have while buying time', is what Lime thought as he arranged his thoughts when...

"Ugh?!" (Levi)

"Levi?!" (Lime)

"Slender arms just as it looks. It is like brushing away a bamboo branch. You, what's your battle experience?"

"You—!!" (Levi)

The right arm of Levi flew away.

It was cut off.

The figure of the woman was still in the sight of Lime.

He couldn't see any movements aside from her mouth moving.

Levi distorted her face in pain for an instant, but soon let out an angry roar and rushed towards the woman with an expression of joy.

She has probably forgotten about Lime.

While thinking of a possibility as he looked at the expression of his coworker, Lime begins his follow-up.

Increase the power of Levi as much as possible, analyze the enemy, and push the state of the battle to their advantage.

It is the usual work he has.

(There's no signs of her using a skill. But she did something with the weapon in her hand. If I remember correctly, that's...a naginata. There's no doubt that she cut off the arm of Levi with it. It is slight, but I can tell that there's scylla blood on it. Meaning that the seed of that sleight of hand was her excellent technique and body strength. In other words, it wasn't actually a sleight of hand, but high-class technique. Wait, that's of no importance. It simply means that this is baaad.) (Lime)

Fortunately, Lime has experienced a bit of a similar technique.

At the time when his superior Tomoe was training in Iai, he has seen similar spectacles like this several times.

(It is frightening how this woman's ability is sharper and more silent than Sis'. She is without doubt an expert..... But in the first place, Sis being able to swing around a katana so sharply in that way without the guidance of anyone is pretty weird in itself. The weapon is different, but this woman is really a troublesome opponent. Damn it!) (Lime)

First, make the enemy move.

At any rate, smash the enemy.

Lime and Levi head towards the same enemy, but their thoughts were practically water and oil.

“Ara ara, can't even introduce yourselves? Okay then. If you are going to repent with your lives, that's also fine with me. No matter the opponent, it wouldn't be good if I don't show respect after all.”

With her instincts going at full-throttle, Levi's human lower half had returned to 8 pitch black octopus legs, and she was pulling a fierce attack only possible with that kind of body.

Matching her rhythm, Lime joins the fight with perfectly coordinated magic and sword techniques.

The woman slightly widened her narrowed eyes as she repelled the attacks of the two and unleashing sharp attacks of her own. And with a voice that leisure can be felt, she continued speaking.

“I am the Osakabe household's, Kasumi Haruka. I am the woman that in the close future will be presenting this city and country to my true love when I arrive to his side.” (Haruka)

“Levi! The name of the one who will crush you! Remember it!” (Levi)

“Be at peace, monster. Depending on how it is used, even someone like you can be accepted by Tomoki-sama.” (Haruka)

“Tch!!”

The katana of Lime was skillfully deviated by Haruka's shoulder

protector.

And when that happened, the blade of the naginata missed Lime by a hair's breadth, he tried to pull a follow-up attack, but was repelled by the returning naginata.

"You are pretty strong. However, you don't know how to use a katana. You don't have a proper master. Could it be a self-taught style?" (Haruka)

"Something wrong with that? Sorry to say that I am a newbie with the katana." (Lime)

"No no, when you have become a comrade serving under Tomoki-sama, I will teach you the basics. Be relieved, you have plenty enough talent." (Haruka)

"Too bad but, I already have a master I serve under, so I am good." (Lime)

"Fufufu, everyone says something similar to that at first. But after a few days, they have a complete change of heart. Our master is that much of a great one after all." (Haruka)

"...How about you come to our side? If it's with that monster-like strength of yours, you would be plenty useful even in our place. Even that far too gone head of yours! If it's our Boss, he can clean it nice!" (Lime)

"...What did you say?" (Haruka)

"As I said, instead of serving under a small fry like the Empire hero that would easily be wiped on the floor by our Boss, how about serving our master, Raidou?! Wow?!" (Lime)

An invisible blade sends the katana of Lime flying.

It was probably the same as when the arm of Levi was cut off.

By the way, the arm of Levi has already regenerated. Covered in tough scales that serve as weapon and armor, she was freely moving that arm around.

So it finally regenerated.

Lime felt a slight sense of accomplishment as his provocation was worth.

And right now, it is not exactly the same situation as before.

This time, it was slight, but he could see her hand blur for a moment.

Motion and speed; it was a feat as if this were the epitome of those. It was a speed that was impossible to catch by the naked eye, is what Lime judged.

Even so, this is the first time he has seen something like this, and it is not realistic to try to have his eyes get used to it in actual combat.

That's why, by gathering information of Haruka's whole body movements and her habits, he has to read the trajectory and range.

Being able to bring out one of Haruka's cards with words was big.

(It is still a complete mystery how she is able to manage such movement with a naginata that doesn't have something like a scabbard though. Somehow managed to make one step forward huh. Now then, I am counting on you brats. If you lead the guests to Boss, our win will be settled....Wa?) (Lime)

The mistake of Lime was by no means a blunder caused by him alone.

Insulting Tomoki, bringing out the name of Raidou, stimulating dissatisfaction; it was close to impossible for him to understand the meaning of that at this point in time after all.

The eyes of Haruka were showing anger.

In the blink of an eye, that anger became hatred, on top of that, she glares at Lime with something close to that of grudge.

“!!”

Levi, who was absorbed in the fight, took distance at the extraordinary aura that came out.

Lime was dumbfounded for an instant at the change of Haruka, but reprimanded himself for stiffening and soon followed after Levi.

“Raidou is better than Tomoki-sama, you say?” (Haruka)

“...At the very least, our Boss doesn't use drugs to recruit people.” (Lime)

“It is simply a necessary tool to efficiently teach others about the charms of Tomoki-sama. Not having his subordinates use the most efficient technique is proof that Raidou is incompetent as a superior.” (Haruka)

“Leaving aside whether Waka-sama is incompetent or not...” (Levi)

(Oi Levi, you are not supposed to say ‘leaving aside’ there.) (Lime)

The voice of Lime's heart almost leaked out.

The reason why he managed to safely stop it was because the aura that Haruka was releasing was steadily entering into a dangerous territory. It was one of the few blessings that this tension was providing.

“From what I have heard, he left the Empire hero half-dead. It is certain that Waka-sama is the stronger one. If I am going to be following someone, I prefer the stronger one. That's why this Tomoki-sama is out of the question. Understand?” (Levi)

“...Half...dead?” (Haruka)

That was the switch.

Those were the words that even Haruka herself didn't know in all of her life that would bring out her true anger.

Her anger to herself for mistaking the man to love, her anger for sleeping with that man that wore the mask of a husband, her anger for the many times she has whispered her love to him, the anger she directed at the father of Iroha; those were all small sparks compared to this. <All of those refer to her actual husband>

Those words that state they have injured the man that fate designated as her true love. The reality that not only were they in an antagonistic relation, they have already directly hurt him.

It is not something that can be forgiven.

Raidou and the Kuzunoha Company are not simply the enemies of

Tomoki anymore; inside Haruka, they have changed to being sworn enemies.

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

The left hand of Haruka was placed on top of the naginata.

Lime who had a simple thought like ‘she will be using both hands now’ was left speechless.

The naginata splitted.

The left hand returns to its previous location with the same motion – with another naginata in hand.

Dual wielding naginatas.

From the black and white naginatas, magic power of their respective color was wafting from them.

An unfamiliar weapon, and on top of that, an unknown fighting style.

Lime remembered something. At a turning point in his life that already feels like it happened long in the past already. The figure of his superior that released a fire that managed to instantly turn the wave of mamonos that appeared in the wasteland into charcoal as she laughed with a refreshing smile.

“I don’t care about the man anymore. I will kill him. About the monster, I will tear off the arms and legs before educating her. The wait-and-see phase for recruitment is over now. We haven’t retrieved Iroha yet after all.” (Haruka)

“Wait, Lime. For a moment now, I was reminded of Mio-sama.” (Levi)

“Same here. I was reminded of Sis Tomoe.” (Lime)

Even if the person they were reminded of is different, they were still the two tops of Asora.

To think that just by it being related to Makoto, this Lorel that they would easily be able to come alone would become such a dangerous.

With a feeling of wanting to gaze at the sky, Lime makes preparations to clash against Haruka with all the skills and techniques he has.

“I am a former adventurer that was polished in the wasteland. Don’t think you will kill me easily.” (Lime)

“Of course. Don’t even think that you will be dying an easy death.”
(Haruka)



The city is writhing in pain.

The smoke that is rising from the many areas and the screams that can be heard from afar had given me that impression.

This is the third time I have seen a big settlement caught up in a fight in this way huh.

Academy Town, Limia capital, and here.

Now that I think about it, I feel like no matter which of those it was, my heart didn’t waver much.

I am in the place where it is occurring, and I am feeling the wind directly in my skin, and yet, what am I thinking...when facing a settlement that has turned into a battlefield?

Even when my mood goes down, it was because of other reasons. Also, in this time’s case, just a few moments ago, I was in a place that was basically the world of the death.

As long as we are alive, we will of course die one day.

That obviously doesn’t mean that you would just abandon someone because of it. It is just that...it is true that I have begun feeling that it is not that pressing of a matter to lose your life.

No...was I feeling that way from the very beginning?

From what I can remember, I don’t think...no, there’s no way, right?

The human woman that was my first kill, I...

“Waka?”

“...Hm?”

Tomoe suddenly called me.

It looks like she received a power from Futsu called Dragon Mother, but her looks have not changed. Her internal power has splendidly increased though.

Rather than calling it an enhancement of the body, it is more like a boost in magic power and skill... For Tomoe, who is aiming to become a samurai, this might not be to her taste though.

Well, in Tomoe's case, her body strength is already quite high anyways. It is only a matter of how to use it, and that's something that can only be gained by experience and training, or so I think.

“It looks like this avenue is burning but, what should we do first?”
(Tomoe)

“Waka-sama, I think we should prioritize the protection of the soy sauce stores, miso stores, and the ingredient market.” (Mio)

“Mio... Fumu, leaving aside the market, the soy sauce and miso can serve to make Sake. If we were to get their favor, it would make negotiations in the future easier. Waka, I think Mio's proposal is good. What do you think?” (Tomoe)

“...It is true that the more samples the better huh. Fine. Mio will go to the warehouses and then the market. Tomoe will...” (Makoto)

“...I was thinking about dealing with the small fries after confirming my power and showing it off. I would be grateful if Waka were to accompany me.” (Tomoe)

“I'm fine with that. Then, the other two, cooperate with Rokuya-san and Rose Garden in the evacuation of the citizens.” (Makoto)

““Yes!!””

Beren and Hokuto nod with strength.

Shii was in a weird state, so I had her return to Asora. Tamaki is looking after her, so there's no problem with the emergency treatment. Even if

something were to happen and she is unable to manage, she can just ask Shiki.

And so, I will be dealing with the people that have been affected by the drug of Tomoki and are rampaging around huh.

Well, this is my third time dealing with something like this, so it should be fine.

I use [Sakai] to get a rough idea of the situation.

Hm, the hotel is being attacked.

I am glad I increased the number of personnel there as insurance.

...Eh?

There's one around the hotel that is pretty strong.

The ones there with that strong one are Lime and Levi.

They are quite injured.

"Tomoe, sorry. Lime and Levi are in trouble at the hotel. Can you go there?" (Makoto)

"Hoh~, those guys huh. Understood. I hope it is a samurai that I can enjoy my time with. Well then, I will be taking my leave now." (Tomoe)

"Okay." (Makoto)

After having Tomoe head to the hotel, I go back to confirming the situation more deeply.

There's still no casualties yet at the warehouses that Mio has gone to.

The mercenary group, Picnic Rosegarden, and Rokuya-san were here with me just a few moments ago, but when they confirmed the state of the city, they immediately separated and began acting.

It looks like they will be prioritizing the escape of the citizens.

There's around three hundred attacking the city. The levels are all pretty high, but the numbers are low.

Thinking about that after comparing it with the scale of the other

situations I have been in, I try expanding 'Sakai' to the outsides of the city as well.

Oh.

There's several armed people heading to Kannaoi.

It would be nice if they were allies but...oh, they are enemies huh.

Ooh, Kannoi is truly in trouble.

There's a group of people heading to this city from the south; numbers total around a thousand. The levels are around the same as the ones attacking here; average of 200.

Kannaoi was about to be destroyed.

But.

We are here.

First of all, let's regroup with Iroha-chan and the others.

Now then, where is she—

“...Wa?!!!”

Once I got the location of Iroha-chan, I involuntarily let out my voice.

Why...

Why are you here, Izumo?! Or more like, you guys!

I change my coat to red and teleport to the closest place of the group of people.

No really, give me a break, Rotsgard Children!

Chapter 292: Izumo and Iroha

The numbers are 14.

Since learning about the existence of the scent that contains the charm power of Tomoki, I have prepared a special filter, and when I looked through it, I learned that everyone is quite the severe case of Tomoki worshipper.

It went well when using it in conjunction with [Sakai], so I tried to see if I could use it when looking through it normally, and it seems it is still useful.

I had no need and chance to utilize it when I was at the deep parts of the labyrinth fighting with Picnic Rosegarden and the Adventurers of Origin, but it is great that I came prepared.

Maybe they were former skilled adventurers and soldiers; their level is high and their movements don't show openings.

Of course, the equipment they have is also quite good and stands out.

There's mostly women, but there's a decent amount of men as well.

From the little bit I investigated, I learned that Kannaoui has send their military force and their public order unit, but due to the difference in levels being pretty big, it is practically impossible for them alone to control this situation.

Levels don't mean everything, but when battle happens and all circumstances are the same, the one who wins is the one with the higher level.

It is definitely not a factor that should just be ignored.

...Especially in this situation where, for some reason, my students have come to this city.

The deep bad feeling I felt for a while now had swelled up greatly.

I want to ask Shiki about this right this instant, but calming down this situation comes first.

Even so, there's no way that Shiki would bring them to such a dangerous place without a single thought in mind. He worries more about their growth and future than me after all.

And there's no way that Shiki is completely unrelated to Jin and the others being here.

Aah~, this is bothering me.

This is not good. I have already decided on what to do, and yet, I am feeling so uneasy.

Hm, eliminating the threats comes first.

"Rai...dou..."

One of the 14 people there noticed me who had suddenly appeared inside their formation.

A merciless bloodthirst was directed at me all at once.

"If it were in the Empire, I wouldn't complain about your situation, but you know, this is Lorel Union, a country that's not yours." (Makoto)

It is true that the bloodthirst is sharp and strong, fitting of their level. But today, I have already been bathed in bloodthirst that's on a whole other level.

Let's do it in the same way as the Shadowless before, and instantly--ah.

"Fuh!!"

I was about to crush the head of the handsome youth, that made a sharp slash at me, by using the Magic Armor, but at that moment, I noticed. This might become a repeat from last time.

It is the factor that the gruesomeness of the corpses might swell up hatred.

As long as we are fighting for our lives in the battlefield, it is natural for one side or the other to die as a conclusion. But there are times when the way of doing it is important as well.

It would be another case if we were to wipe them all out, but it is

especially true when there's witnesses and there's the need to protect them.

In the first place, this time, there's enemies that killing would be the wrong answer.

I have absolutely no intentions of having a war with Lorel. But depending on how I deal with this, there's the chance that it might become unavoidable.

The way I got rid of the Shadowless, and the one before that...the matter with Illumgand as well.

My uneasiness has numbed my thoughts in a nice way.

This is a good opportunity.

"Silver One, [Lapushka]" (Makoto)

I stop going arialess and purposely mixed an aria and form a spell by manifesting magic power.

"Fall back!! An enhancement spell; the activation time is bizarrely fast!"

"!!"

With the aria that surpasses by a bit the 5 seconds, it is enough for the enemy to know the type of spell.

From the index finger and middle finger I extended, a magic power needle that is slightly shorter and narrower than a dagger appeared.

I will leave the Magic Armor to rest in this occasion and just keep it at covering my body.

And then, seeing the equipment and outfit of the man in front of me, I decided on how to deal with him.

I grab the blade of the katana with my left hand and deviate its trajectory, and just like that, I pull the katana and him onto me.

"Have a good night." (Makoto)

"!!!! Tomo...ki-sama..."

I pierce the needle into the neck of the man that even though he is a man has quite the beautiful neck.

Instant death? No no, ain't that a bit too rash there, Boss?

Wait, why did I say that in the tone of Lime?

Well, there's no problem at all. I just used a spell that easily creates people in a state of apparent death. By the way, I was taught this by Mio.

I don't know what type of spell it is, but it is a mysterious spell that I can tell from its aria that it is different from normal.

When I separate my left hand, the magic needle was still pierced in his neck, and the handsome boy fell onto the ground. He is not moving at all.

A similar needle extends from my two fingers again.

It looks like the people that have been affected by the charm of Tomoki have all been equally sent to the battlefield, but their original positions are definitely not equal. There's probably big-shots in that group of people and people connected with big-shots.

In that case, we leave them on the verge of death, and later, have Tomoe inspect them to decide what we should do.

If the needle is taken out just like that, they would die, but well, if that happens, let's just leave it as being their bad luck.

"I think that 'the current you' are hopeless beyond salvation. But, even so, if people out there wish for you guys to keep on living, for today...I am thinking about leaving them that chance to. My apologies." (Makoto)

There's 13 remaining.

The highest leveled one is around 400.

For now, I will make sure they don't die while properly gauging their danger.

Let's hurry.



"However, there's no assurance you will survive. Even if we were to take

just one of the enemies, they are all higher than any of you guys here. Not only that, this is a true battlefield where you don't know what will happen at each passing second. Izumo, you are prepared for that, right?"

"Yes." (Izumo)

An immediate response.

Being told about the incident occurring in the second biggest city of Lorel Union, Kannaoi, I didn't hold any hesitation.

High level adventurers and influential nobles all know that any citizen would want to stay in the Chihiro Manrai restaurant, and this high-class restaurant has received a night assault.

There's Raidou-sensei at that place and there's also his aides.

No matter what happens, I feel like the city will be okay.

But...right now, at that place, there's princess Iroha.

I heard that the insurgents are aiming for her.

Even so, if asked if I had to go there, that's not the case. There's already fighting forces here that I wouldn't even be able to lift a finger against after all.

But she is my fiancée.

I have only met her a few times. I can't properly imagine what she looks like right now, but I can tell how she is from her letters.

It is certain that I hold warm feelings mixed with admiration towards her.

Of course, we are not in a sexual relationship. The princess is still young after all.

If asked whether this is love that is directed to the opposite sex, I wouldn't be able to tell.

I simply want to be by her side and protect her.

I want to be the one to protect her.

I want to eliminate the dangers that approach her.

Once I heard about the situation from Shiki-san, I naturally thought of this.

I was thinking about meeting her in a not so far future.

Whether it is my dream, or to fulfill my duty of joining the princess of Kannaoui; I want to have a talk until we can reach an understanding, and then...no matter what kind of result it brings forth, I won't allow the very chance of even having a conversation to be lost.

No matter how strong Sensei is, I don't want to leave it all to him.

Sensei refused to let me accompany him, but right now, what I want to do is clear.

The current me has experience living in the Academy. I have increased my level to a decent degree. I have a clear oath, a clear conviction that I didn't have in the past.

I have to go.

"That's a nice face you have there, Izumo. Everyone else as well. I will say it with confidence here. Once you return alive from this, you will have completely surpassed the power of a student. You might even obtain a big step that will connect to what's further ahead. Well then, go. Make sure not to forget greeting Waka-sama." (Shiki)

"Yes!!"

Several voices overlap.

I wonder what kind of expression I have right now.

At the very least, I haven't felt this fresh since the time I understood the concept of the movement aria and began to apply it.

This is the second time in my life.

Shiki-san holds his staff in both hands and draws a circle.

As always, there's no aria.

The inside of the drawn circle had white dense mist coming out from it.

“Yeah, the current Izumo-kun is truly cool. If you didn’t have a fiancée, I might have fallen for you.” (Yuno)

Yuno gives me a praise that I couldn’t tell if she was joking or being serious.

As she is always saying that if she were to marry someone, she has to be the number one or she doesn’t want to, it must be a joke.

If it were a marriage with the second daughter of a merchant, there’s the possibility, but it is most likely impossible for her to become my first wife.

Also, the Rembrandt Company is definitely not a simple wealthy merchant company.

I look around.

Jin, Amelia, Misura, Daena, Sif, and Yuno; the first comrades I can rely with this life of mine that has always been living dryly all this time.

I was thinking about going alone to Kannaoui, but they said they will be coming along as if natural. They are the best friends I could have.

Even when Shiki-san has told them about the danger, their decision still didn’t change.

If I didn’t know what laid ahead of this mist was a battlefield, I definitely would have been crying.

I readied myself and wear the amulet that Shiki-san distributed to everyone. An equipment that he told us not to take off no matter what.

Now, let’s go.

I stand at the front and step into the mist.

We didn’t walk through a mist corridor, I simply saw the nostalgic buildings of Lorel. At that place, there’s the one working at Kuzunoha Company, Lime-san, and one girl I have never seen before.

And also...

“Izumo-sama?”

“Princess Iroha.” (Izumo)

There were several people who had the clothing of Lorel.

We both called out each other's name.

From behind me, I heard the voice of Yuno saying: 'thanks for the meal~', but I ignore it. And after that, I also heard a blunt sound followed by an 'Ouch, that hurts Onee-chan!', but I also ignore that one.

Good grief, do these kind of things really happen?

We both shouldn't know how we look, and yet, we both were able to know who each other was the moment our eyes met.

If my dream, the happiness of this person, my duties of the household, and the many obligations I have, all connect with each other, there would be nothing as blissful as that.

“ ... ”

After calling her name, I was filled with so much emotion that I couldn't bring out any words.

Ah, I love this girl.

I have never felt like this in Academy Town.

I can clearly declare this.

“Ah, so it was Izumo huh. And Jin and the others as well. I have heard about the 'circumstances'. Nice to see you here. Welcome to the battlefield.” (Lime)

“Lime-san.” (Izumo)

“Sorry, but leave the romantic reunion for later. We don't have much leisure of time. We will be escaping this place as soon as possible and leave the city. And the highest priority is to regroup with Boss –Raidou-sama.” (Lime)

“Y-Yes!”

“Jin, I heard you just came out from sickbed, but this is a decision you made. Since you have come, you will have to show results.” (Lime)

“...I know.” (Jin)

Jin replies to the instructions in my stead.

He didn't come out for a while since the time he got injured, but I wonder what happened. Jin has not told us yet. But the resolve that lies in those eyes, there's no doubt that he has become stronger than before.

...Compared to that...what am I even doing?

For an instant, I forgot completely about what kind of situation we are in.

Right.

I will protect princess Iroha. Even if my ability is poor, I came here in order to protect her.

"I have heard plenty about you guys' strength from Brother Shiki. Let's wrap up the self-introductions while we are escaping from here. What's important is the safety of princess Iroha. The protection of the princess will be firstly done by the maids. That's why, there's no need to think about unnecessary teamwork. In the fights, you just go about your usual teamwork with your usual comrades to protect princess Iroha." (Lime)

"...Understood." (Misura)

Misura nods.

How reassuring.

If he were to seriously do the protecting, I feel like the escape and bodyguarding can be done at the same time.

"Then, let's go. I have already spoken to the princess and the others about the route. Once we go outside, don't trust anyone. Also..." (Lime)

"..."

Lime-san glances at Sif and Yuno, and for only an instant, he stopped his words.

"...Don't hesitate. On the enemy side, there's people with higher level than yours and more experience, and most of them won't hesitate in killing anyone except the princess. It might even be that everyone there

won't hesitate." (Lime)

...

With an incredibly indifferent voice that held no emotions which I have never seen before from him, Lime-san continues.

"That's why, don't hesitate. No matter who it is, anyone that's directing their blade at you, don't think about it and just cut them down. There's millions of people who have died while they were thinking. You guys make sure you never enter those numbers." (Lime)

"...Thank you very much, Lime-san." (Izumo)

A kindness that couldn't be detected from simply his tone of voice could be felt.

Words of gratitude honestly came out of my mouth.

Now that I think about it, have I ever been able to feel true gratitude at warnings before I met with Sensei?

"I will hear your gratitude at tomorrow's breakfast. Definitely will. Now go!!" (Lime)

"Yes!"

My eyes met with princess Iroha's.

As I thought, a warm feeling wells up.

I forcefully push them back and concentrate my fighting will –in order to protect.

"Izumo-sama and his comrades! I am Akashi! I work as the bodyguard of Iroha-sama. It may be for a short time but, I am looking forward to working with you. Well then, first of all, let's escape the hotel! Follow me!" (Akashi)

"Same here. A bodyguard of Iroha-sama, name's Yudoku. I will not think of you people as students, but close aides of the princess. All excuses like 'this is my first time' are a no. Do your best, okay?" (Yudoku)

"My name is Shougetsu, Izumo-sama. In order to decide a date for the

wedding, let's overcome this long night!" (Shougetsu)

I will do it.

Even if I have to bring out everything that is held within this body of mine.

If it is not enough, I will bring out everything out of my future self as well!

I will bring the Princess to where Sensei is.

We will all bring her there!

Chapter 293: It was an irreconcilable enemy

As fast as possible.

It is my intention to deal with the Tomoki fanatics, but there was a single miscalculation.

It looks like...I am being incredibly hated by these people.

I understand that for the Tomoki side, I may not look like a likeable person, and I am aware of this. But to think that they would be hating me this much... Even a person like me who isn't aiming to be liked by thousands would get depressed by this.

As a result, I, who was thinking about reuniting with Jin and the others, ended up being attacked by high level adventurers one after the other.

Until now, I have somehow appeased around 60 of them with the needle.

"Tch."

What was reflected at the side of my vision made me click my tongue.

I saw people driven by their hatred killing the attackers that I had incapacitated.

Suddenly having their city burned and thrown into chaos, and some having their family and important people killed, it is obvious that there would be hatred born inside the hearts of the citizens.

Just that...if I was planning on killing the attackers, I would have done so myself.

Can't they take a hint that I have a reason why I am leaving them alive?

Impossible huh.

I am completely sure of my safety even in a situation like this. It is just by chance that I have enough power and I am able to think in this kind of way.

I currently don't have the leeway to complain about the actions of the citizens.

The most I can do is warn them with the writings I do with magic power.

Slipping through three attacks of approaching weapons, I stick a needle in one of the attackers. While at it, I offset the magic that they cast at me without caring, not only of the city, but even their comrades getting dragged in it.

Really, this is a battle in a city, and yet, this way of fighting doesn't make me think that's the case at all. In a sense, you could say that these attacks are quite manly.

If this were the outskirts, I would also have more options you know!

A light armored girl suddenly jumped out from the shadow of her comrade.

A thief skill, maybe? But I don't see anything weapon-like on her—wait, oi oi oi!!

“Gunpowder?! I thought it would be something like a molotov cocktail, but that thing can already be considered an explosive!” (Makoto) Without a single trace of hesitation, the girl approached me with her body wrapped in explosives.

The needle won't be enough for this.

In a moment, I did an arialess fire element nullifier magic.

It is originally a spell that would create a veil that nullifies the element, but in this occasion, I had it slip in between the girl and the explosives wrapped around her, and covered her body in it.

Ah geez.

I can't tell how much power it has.

Gotta pray this is enough then!

“Raidou, die.”

“I refuse!” (Makoto)

I hug the woman that had finally spoken something.

Ah, I could have made the Magic Armor bigger.

If this weren't in this kind of situation and she were a bit more of an adult, this would have been a nice situation where a girl is wishing to hug me.

An explosion occurs inside our curled up bodies.

The sound wasn't that big of a deal.

Now then, the girl is...okay, she is alright!

Well then, excuse me while I stick this needle in you! OK!

While at it, I also stick the needles to the neck of the other two that were stiffened.

"But there's no end to them. When thinking about the damage lessening due to them swarming towards me, this is not that bad of a situation, but..." (Makoto) It is troublesome that they are not caring about the damage they cause to the city.

The next wave is already heading towards me.

My location has already been completely grasped between them it seems. Even so, if I were to leave this place, I wouldn't know how the gathered up people would move next.

It is fine for them to just chase after me.

But in that case, they could have just form an enclosure at the entrance of the dungeon. Now that they have attacked the hotel and the city, I don't think they are only moving in order to attack me.

I should reduce their numbers for a bit more in this way, and go to where Jin, Iroha, and the others after I am done with that. It seems like they are together after all.

(Waka-sama! I have secured the warehouses. The miso, soy sauce, and craftsmen are safe as well.) (Mio) (Thanks, Mio.) (Makoto)

Mio's thought transmission.

Looks like the seasonings have not received any damage.

...Well, I wasn't so worried about that though.

There was plenty of a possibility that they would be destroyed as collateral-damage, but I didn't think it would be a priority, moreover, Mio went there, so there was nothing to worry about.

Even if the boss of the bunch were to try to destroy the miso and soy sauce as if their life depended on it, I think it would have been impossible.

Boss huh.

I can tell that there's one clear individual that's a cut above the rest. An individual that I would have to wonder if Lime and Levi, who stayed at the Chihiro Manrai Restaurant, can actually defeat.

But well, there's no doubt that Lime and Levi, who are prioritizing keeping the people in place, will be enduring for a good while.

That person's strength is around the middle of Azu-san's group and the adventurers. It is a woman and, in truth, I can somewhat tell her identity.

If possible, I want to be wrong, but...no way I am.

(Then, I will also be helping out Waka-sama—) (Mio) (No, this place is fine.) (Makoto)

(Eh?)

(Mio, can you bring out the name of the Osakabe household and Iroha-chan in order to evacuate the residents in that district to a place that's slightly separated from the city?) (Makoto) (B-But I want to be by your side too...) (Mio)

(There's Tomoe already, so I will be fine. Sorry, this might be a pain for you.) (Makoto) (No no! Understood.) (Mio)

(Okay. There's a strange gathering of people outside the city that are heading this way. Be careful.) (Makoto) (Yes, Waka-sama as well.) (Mio)

Mio was trying to come to where I am, so I gave her a reason not to.

Hah...did I make her sad?

It felt like she wanted to say something. But if possible, I don't want Mio to fight too much today. That's what I thought when I heard about the fight Mio had with Rokuya-san.

Good grief, I am...truly pathetic.

Sorry.

(A~h, test test. Makoto-kun, is it working? It is Rokuya) (Rokuya) (... Yeah, I can hear you, Rokuya-san.) (Makoto)

(To be frank here, there's apparently people who agree with the Empire's hero heading towards the city.) (Rokuya) The information that Rokuya-san had brought to me was something that I had already grasped with Sakai.

(Yeah, they are approaching from several directions, and their total numbers might surpass the ten thousands. I am aware of this.) (Makoto) (!! As expected of you. But from several directions...and tens of thousands huh. Fumu...) (Rokuya) (When I finish doing something about the inside of the city, I will deal with them while at it-) (Makoto) (No.) (Rokuya)

?

(I will do it.) (Rokuya)

Rokuya-san will?

I was internally surprised by what he said.

Rokuya-san is strong. But I don't feel like his strengths are oriented to fights against groups. On top of that, in the case of the Tomoki fanatics, just crushing their leader won't work. There's the need to kill everyone or incapacitate them.

(No, that's just...) (Makoto)

(Hahaha, I overdid it a bit underground against you guys after all. Please let me atone a bit here. More importantly, Vivi and the others are helping out in the evacuation, but the bandits' way of doing things is way too extreme.) (Rokuya) (...Yeah.) (Makoto)

I experienced a suicide bomber just moments ago, so I agree with what

he said.

Evacuating the residents to a safe place against people, that do things in such ways, is close to impossible.

(And so, I want to increase the allies.) (Rokuya) (Allies, you say?)
(Makoto)

(You know, the saying 'the enemy of my enemy' kind of thing. It is a man named Kougetsu. In the matter that they are trying to bring a revolution to Kannaoui makes him no different from an insurgent, but he is someone that can cooperate in the matter of dealing with the people that are going as far as burning down the city to smoke you and princess Iroha out.) (Rokuya) Kougetsu.

If I remember correctly, he is the older or younger brother of Shougetsusan. Well, they are brothers.

From what I have heard, he is a person that didn't really welcome us since the moment we entered the city.

From what Rokuya is saying right now, Kougetsu probably doesn't have a shallow connection with the Tomoki fanatics.

(The one that is in charge of the patrolling, insurgencies, and the suppression of foreign enemies is Kougetsu. He is currently desperately taking command in order to appease the chaos.) (Rokuya) (...Can't pity him though.) (Makoto)

(Umu. When this matter is wrapped up, he will most likely take responsibility in some form. He is an upright man at his core after all. But right now, it would go better if we were to have him help out. He is a specialist regarding this city after all.) (Rokuya) True.

...Ah, right. In that case, if I had them arrest the people that I have already dealt with, we might be able to decrease the rampage of the residents like the ones just now, right?

That's nice.

That's a good idea.

(Makoto-kun?) (Rokuya)

(Understood. Then, I will try calling them.) (Makoto) (Thanks. Well then, later.) (Rokuya)

(Wish you luck.) (Makoto)

(...Luck huh. Well, watch over me.) (Rokuya)

The thought transmission of Rokuya-san cuts.

I wonder how he will deal with that army.

...Ah! Maybe he intends to show me as atonement as well!

Is that his intention?

“Well, first of all, it is the army that’s outside the city and the patrol.”

(Makoto) The ones who are down with a needle pierced in them are the attackers and they haven’t died yet; in order to avoid having the residents make a panic and kill the incapacitated attackers, ask for the arrest of the attackers; and the members of the Picnic Rosegarden have come out from the labyrinth and are helping out in the evacuation of the residents, moreover, the Kuzunoha Company is participating in that as well.

While evading the sharp attacks of a 4 member party that surpass level 300, I think of the situation.

Why are such high level people that can even manage in the wasteland attacking me?!

I create a template and somehow manage to send the writings to a place close to where the army and related party that ‘Sakai’ perceived is located.

“Hm?”

The boss is moving.

The barrier of Lime and Levi that was covering the Chihiro Manrai Restaurant has been destroyed.

Impossible. It is too fast.

On top of that, that should be where Tomoe headed to.

(Tomoe!) (Makoto)

(Waka, if it's about Lime and Levi, they are still alive. I had something I had to confirm with Shiki and was slightly late. I am truly sorry.) (Tomoe)
(What happened?) (Makoto)

(It seems like even when they were inferior in numbers, they still managed to maintain a balanced fight, but our arrival seems to have worked in a bad way.) (Tomoe) (...As in?) (Makoto)

Our arrival worked in a negative way?

(The two of them must have thought that with this they have won, and they must have relaxed their guard because of it. Levi got several of her legs cut off and went berserk; Lime prepared himself to challenge the enemy, but he couldn't manage to do follow-ups on the rampaging Levi and the barrier ended up cracking...is how things happened.) (Tomoe)
Several legs, she says.

Levi turned into her scylla form?

In that form, she has thick octopus-like legs after all.

In reality, she has a mechanic in her fighting style of changing her leg shapes, and when Levi has become like that, her fights become pretty interesting to watch.

And even with that, she lost?

Good grief.

I have not seen a human stronger than Sofia yet, but even if it's not to that level, there's still strong people in this world.

(Well, Levi is a battle-junkie after all. As long as she is alive, she can laugh it off.) (Makoto) (...No well, it seems like quite the amount of steam has risen to her head. She is repeatedly muttering things like 'I will kill that bitch' and 'I will bite her to death'.) (Tomoe) (Levi is? I can't imagine it at all. At any rate, if they need treatment, return them to Asora.) (Makoto) (I will do so. Leaving aside Lime, Levi doesn't have arms and legs after all. Truly disappointing.) (Tomoe) ...

Isn't that incredibly serious then?!

What is she saying so nonchalantly?!

Hm, so that's why she was consulting with Shiki huh. No, if that's the case, the order of the events wouldn't match.

Woops, the next opponent is a samurai huh.

He has a slower iai than that of Tomoe, so it doesn't amount to a surprise attack.

I grab the katana's blade with my left hand and break it, step in, and pierce him with the match-decider needle.

(So, what did you talk with Shiki about?) (Makoto) (A bit about the reason why the students are here.) (Tomoe) ...Ah, I see. It is true that I want to know that too.

(What did Shiki say?) (Makoto)

(He said he wanted to explain it to Waka directly. It is just that...) (Tomoe) (Just that?) (Makoto)

(His explanation was...something that, in my opinion, I agree with.) (Tomoe) Tomoe says it in a way that bothers me.

In her opinion, she says.

In other words, maybe it is a reason that I wouldn't agree with?

(Ah, no. I am not saying it in the meaning that Waka wouldn't agree with it, okay? It is about Mio. She most likely wouldn't agree with Shiki's action. That's all I thought. In regards to what Waka will think after hearing the explanation of Shiki, well, there's a fifty-fifty.) (Tomoe) Mio?

And I am fifty-fifty?

Hm?

(Well, okay. I will hear what Shiki has to say later.) (Makoto) I don't think it is something that can be resolved while listening to it in a battlefield.

In that case, there's nothing the both of us would gain from hearing it at

this moment via thought transmission.

(So, about that woman, she isn't moving her gaze away and heading directly towards where Iroha is. Fortunately, there's an idiot in between that can't even hold the reins properly and is moving around in confusion outside the city, so there's still some leeway in time.) (Tomoe) The idiot she is talking about must mean Kougetsu.

And when Tomoe says that woman, it is already a given who it is.

Osakabe Haruka.

Iroha-chan's...mother.

Don't like this.

Even so, we just had a talk not that long ago about leaving the idiot alive being better.

Can't be helped. Let's request this of Tomoe.

(Understood. I will head to where Iroha-chan is. Sorry but, can you please safeguard that idiot?) (Makoto) (Hah? Safeguard?) (Tomoe)

(Yeah, there's a matter in mind, you see. For now, I am dealing with the Tomoki fanatics without killing them, but the people of the city, you see...) (Makoto) (...I get it. Using Kougetsu and his subordinates, you want them to apprehend them?) (Tomoe) After a small silence, Tomoe answered.

She splendidly deduced what I was thinking.

(Yeah, something like that.) (Makoto)

(As you wish. Well then, I accept the duty of safeguarding and persuasion of Kougetsu. By the way, Waka.) (Tomoe) (Hm?) (Makoto)

(You said 'without killing'.) (Tomoe)

(Yes?) (Makoto)

(This is just a possibility but, could it be that you are utilizing that thing that Mio and the Arkes showed off not that long ago?) (TOmoe) ...Tomoe is seriously incredible.

She even pinpointed the magic that I selected for this occasion.

It is a mystery why her voice is slightly raspy and trembling though.

(Correct. How scary, Tomoe. Is it that? The power of that so called Mother Dragon thing?) (Makoto) (N-No. Honestly speaking, what I was worried about was exactly that. I myself can tell that my strength has jumped up, but uhm...it is quite the mischievous one, you see. I am currently in a state where I would heavily overdo it even when doing only one illusion...) (Tomoe) (As I thought...) (Makoto)

(That's of no importance right now, Waka!!) (Tomoe) (Uoo?!) (Waka)

(Meaning that! Right now! Waka is! Using that spell, right?!) (Tomoe) (Y-Yeah.) (Waka)

(At that place! Waka is!) (Tomoe)

W-What is it?

What's making Tomoe so excited?

Did I miss something again?

(Doesn't that mean a theater play of Shikake-nin Baian is taking place there?!) (Tomoe) <Couldn't find any context regarding this. But it is a 1981 film.)

(*Cough*!! S-Sorry. I got so high strung that I ended up getting a nosebleed and vomiting blood. Aaa~h, I want to go see i~t!! I want to go there and act as lad Kosugi~~. Gununu, that damn Futsu, pushing such a troublesome thing onto me~~!!!) (Tomoe)

Okay. For now, let's concentrate on this bearded men that are releasing a trio fusion attack at me. Don't know if they are blowing it out or vomiting it out, but let's not think about it.

Also, Futsu wouldn't think that there would be a flashy battle in the middle of the city the day that she gave you her powers, so I think blaming her for that is way too harsh.

(Well then, Tomoe, see you later.) (Makoto)

(Ah, Waka! I implore you, please let me watch that scene later! Please~~!!) (Tomoe) Shikake-nin.

Geez, I had absolutely no intentions of that though.

I am beginning to get embarrassed now that Tomoe said it.

“With this, it makes 108! If it were worldly desires, I would already be done with this, but the Tomoki fanatics are persistent!” (Makoto) <108 worldly desires in Buddhism.> Jin and the others are also moving as they defeat a decent amount.

Incapacitating the attackers would be an impossible request, so they are killing them, but in terms of level and battle experience, the opponents that are going full bloodthirst at them are in the advantage, so the situation is difficult.

Jin and the others are clearly bringing out more than their current strength when fighting.

If possible, I don't want any of them dying.

No matter the reason, having a student die when the teacher is at their side would make it impossible for that teacher to face them.

I have already dealt with the people that were fighting me in close range.

My head is hurting already.

So, let's go finish this!

Chapter 294: Encounter with the worst

Lorel Union sheltered many Wise and had received their power and blessing.

Their national power increased and grew to a point where they would be counted as one of the major powers, but their base policy had not changed.

According to the teachings of the Goddess, they have to put importance in outward appearance, but at times, they would positively receive the bad looking Wise and welcomed the hard to earn knowledge that is overflowing inside of them. But that doesn't always bring good.

Wise; they are mostly modern era japanese people and were people that had no connection with war. These people were excelling as warriors or as sages, however, they practically felt no desire to direct their blades at the world thanks to Lorel.

From the standards of this world, the Wise had obtained important peace.

There were some who wished for battle and pursued it, but they left Lorel, and most of them didn't return. That's why, even when Lorel Union increased its power high enough to be called a major power, they didn't do any invading type of war even once.

Civil wars occur and there are times in diplomacy where it was close to becoming a war, but in terms of big wars, Lorel Union splendidly managed to not have any.

The Wise turning their backs on them was the one thing that Lorel feared the most after all.

In the current war with the demon race, they have felt the danger to their race, so they are mostly providing assistance from the back and are participating actively in it though.

At any rate, they possess strength and knowledge, and yet, they didn't exert it without reason and lived a peaceful lifestyle.

These supermen that had strange appearances were politely received by the people of Lorel at first as 'envoys of the Spirit-samas'.

They weren't explorers that sought for knowledge, and yet, they had mysterious knowledge in wide areas, and they had that knowledge as if it were natural.

In time, because of the way they were, the people began calling this envoys of spirits as 'Wise'.

...At times, marrying his bride and joining her family; or it can be, she marries her groom and joins his family.

The blood of the Wise remains thinly within the people of Lorel.

Many don't manifest any power. It simply served as a pride and boasting ingredient; simple blood.

But at times, that blood can awaken.

Those people are sometimes called Rebound People.

For example; people that haven't trained at all, and yet, possess a tough body. For example; manifesting a special power that's not magic or a skill. For example; possessing strong magic power like the breathtaking magic power of the Priestess.

There are times when they would inherit great power, and there are times when the generation would lean onto that person.

If you look at the past of the military households in the current Lorel Union, you would most likely find roots of the Wise somewhere.

The military household Ikusabe and Okasabe fall in that category.

The student of Makoto, Izumo, also holds faint Wise blood in him.

When talking about talent, you could say that his blood is showing its power, but sadly to say, he has no power manifested from his Wise blood.

The ones who have manifested that power in the current Lorel Union are three according to the information the Empress Sairitz holds.

That's right. The Lorel that possesses the population of a major power

only has three.

One of them is the Priestess. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it is a person that Sairitz raised. A person that respects her without bounds.

The other one has disappeared. They don't know its whereabouts, but it is a mage called Mokuren. An eccentric person that utilizes old techniques like puppet and talisman magic, and aside from his Wise blood, he also had demi-human blood in him which made the people in his surroundings glare at him.

At the times when Sairitz regrets her failures as an Empress and central politics in the past, she would always mutter 'how regrettable', and one of the people she would think of is him.

And then, the one other person. A brave woman that was only active for a short amount of time, and yet, remains vividly in the memories of the soldiers that knew of her at that time.

Her name is Osakabe Haruka.

She is person that is sung as the main character of a blighted love story, but Sairitz mourns the fact that she had lost such a military strength just because of a love affair.

It is said that the first time she took a sword in her hands was when an assassin's dagger was directed at the man she loved.

The villain that jumped at them in the secret rendezvous point was the first victim of hers.

Contrary to the man of good social status that got weak on his knees, Haruka had taken the sword that was left on the floor, stood in front of the man, and without a single trace of hesitation, cut off the head of those assassins.

Two skilled assassins that were sent there in order to assassinate the man of good standing.

A princess that had taken sword in hand for the first time in her life had managed to defeat two trained fighters...without receiving a single injury.

From that day on, her name was sung as a brave. And whether it was a sword, a spear, or a bow; she would utilize them like a master, and in the battlefield, she would not face a single defeat.

Princess of Many Weapons, Onihime, Hyuman Ogre, Blood General, Neck Hunting Naginata, Head Slicer, Vessel of Thousand Monsters; from the knowledge of Sairitz, there's already this many nicknames tagged onto that woman, so there's no doubt that she is the strongest one-woman army in Lorel.

However, even the invincible woman disappeared from the battlefield as an offering in a political strife, and it has been long since she became a retired person sealed inside the land of Kannaoui.

But just by having that person of name inside Kannaoui, it served as a screen that deterred any kind of artifice from all directions.

And in reality, Sairitz had mostly given up on doing something about the labyrinth, the mercenary group, the Superior Dragon, and Haruka that were all in Kannaoui.

Until the appearance of a joker called Makoto, she had zero intentions of taking any flashy moves.

Osakabe Haruka is a super first rate military power even without training after all. Moreover, she possesses magic power that's close to that of the Priestess, on top of that, she even holds a special ability. She is a Rebound Person through and through.

"I...I..."

A weak voice resounded at the back of Misura.

Misura was about to bend his knees at that, but he gritted his teeth and stopped his feet.

This was possible because he had taken the classes of Makoto and had faced trials that pushed himself to his limits. And most of all, the voice of the people at his back that he must protect properly entered his ears and became his strength.

Important friends that he has experienced joys and sorrows with.

(Then, they are also important people for me.) (Misura)

Making a smile in order to relieve himself even if for a bit, he faces slightly to the side and confirms the state of princess Iroha.

“Princess-sama, it is okay. We are talented people. We will definitely take Izumo and Princess-sama to where Sensei is. If it’s that person, he can wrap up this fighting as if it were a piece of cake.” (Misura)

The color of Iroha’s face was pretty bad.

It is a matter of course.

The city is covered in flames and people that are obviously all strong veterans were attacking Izumo and the others with the intend to kill.

Since a while ago, the rate has decreased quite a lot. However, they were all of high level and were literally warriors that didn’t fear death as they pour swords and magic at them.

Being able to defeat five of those people even if it had been with the help of princess Iroha’s bodyguards is close to a miracle, is what Misura thinks.

Moreover, it is a battle in an urban area.

This battle circumstances are bad.

“Yooou!! [Vine Spike]!” (Sif)

Sif used an earth element spell and a vine with black thorns and decent size was created, crumbling the coordination of the enemy.

Without a moment’s delay, Jin and Daena concentrate their attack on one of the enemies that have been divided while mixing feints, as they pour their all.

Jin at the same time estimated the situation, especially the front, as he draws a route.

Amelia concentrated on sniping from afar and sensing the presence of the moving mages while accurately interrupting and dealing damage to them. On top of that, she is taking command of the whole backline, even

does healing, and cooperating with Sif.

(The Rembrandt sisters are a problem. Sif's power is proportional to its scope. If she increases the power too much, she is unable to make detailed corrections. That's why she can't fulfill her role as a cannon in the middle of this rural area. We haven't been in situations where we would have to worry about that, so...our imagination was lacking.) (Misura)

Misura bites his lips.

If Sif were to use a lava ball, he thinks they could have progressed a lot more.

No matter how injured he gets or how cornered he gets, he should never forget himself in the heat of the moment and keep his calm, and maintain the frontlines even if for a second more. That is Misura's role and this is something that has been beaten into him by Makoto, Shiki, and Tomoe.

That's why he thinks as he analyses this bad situation.

(Also, Yuno. I and most likely she herself was relaxed because of that incredible equipment. She had become a second shield. The meaning of that in our party, the importance of the coordination between Yuno and I, and our role as shields; I hadn't properly taught her that. This was my blunder. I'm such an idiot.) (Misura)

Yuno has been a skillful girl from the very beginning.

That's why, in a party, she was able to cover the frontline or the backline; a switch-type of combatant that was mostly in charge of attack.

But due to her not having a high ability in receiving attacks and dishing them back, they didn't put serious consideration in the coordination with Misura and her in a party.

That situation has changed recently.

Obtaining high level equipment that served as armor and weapon from the Kuzunoha Company, she became an existence that surpassed Misura only in defensive power.

For Misura who was the one who supported the party as its sole shield,

this was a happy change.

Even if the role is called a shield, it doesn't mean that its functions are only one.

Looking for someone to fulfill all functions with only one individual would be impossible unless you are a legendary fighter.

That's why it was a joyous thing that there was now a shield that could maintain the frontlines which was him, and also a shield that possessed speed and could provide strong defense to the backline which was Yuno.

But the current Yuno was becoming desperate listening to the instructions of Amelia in the backlines as she tried to join in the attack.

She has been able to do anything until now, so it couldn't be helped.

A single line of blood trails down the lip of Misura.

It was a bad move to move back from the frontline to take the role of guarding princess Iroha the moment they left the hotel.

And what brought this was the lack of sense of danger that he always feels which led him to such decision.

(If I had kept a proper head on myself!! If I had, we would have managed to bring this girl to a safe place, and yet...!!) (Misura)

No, that's not it.

It is true that the situation is bad.

The momentum of the enemy is decreasing, but the advance of Izumo and the others is visibly decreasing. This is proof that they are receiving more damage than their enemy. This is the sad reality.

Misura thinks of it as his own mistake.

He himself has been troubled with thinking about the course of his future, the conflict with his parents, and the invitations of close priests; a lot of things have been gnawing at him and he is in a dilemma.

While thinking that this is not like him, he couldn't concentrate in the classes, and made stupid mistakes as well.

That's why he thinks that's the case here as well, but in reality, it is the contrary.

Not only Misura, but Jin, Amelia, Daena, and of course Izumo were showing strength that surpassed their actual ability.

Sif has also fully realized that she is lacking in control of her own firepower, and is silently shifting her spells to ones that serve as follow-up for Jin and Daena.

Yuno is also at the back of Misura and he is feeling insecure about her, but she is turning the gears in her head in her own way.

That they haven't been checkmated is the achievement that they should be the most proud of.

If Amelia and Sif were not doing precise healing to Iroha's bodyguards, Akashi and Yudoku, they would have died a long time ago.

The maids that were the shadows of the princess had all died outside the reach of Misura, but even with that, the losses are way too few.

Akashi and Yudoku also had their jaws drop at the way the students were fighting. They even felt weak-minded that they were being saved by the students when they should be the most experienced ones here.

Shougetsu was surprised at the unexpected strength of the Rotsgard students, while holding the old mallet handle he used long in the past to provide assistance in the battle, at times dealing the finishing blow to the enemies that had their coordination crumble as he contributed in maintaining the frontlines.

(Lime-san and that woman stayed to protect the back, and yet, the bad feeling from my back is still there. Damn it.) (Shougetsu)

The moment Shougetsu sent a sign with his eyes to Akashi and Yudoku who were wounded all over their body and were about to continue moving with Jin and Daena leading, three new shadows fell from above.

"Damn it~!! Aren't there way too many high level assassins no matter where you see it?!" (Izumo)

Izumo releases a tornado at the same time as he shouts this complain.

Misura also agreed with this.

He understood this when he clashed blades with them but, these enemies are skilled to a scary level. Putting it bluntly, there were only enemies that have more experience and level than them.

It isn't as despairing as in their classes, but this is actual combat.

If they don't win, they die.

"I-It's okay! I will give it to you! That's why...!" (Iroha)

"...Princess-sama?" (Misura)

"Princess?!" (Izumo)

"Iroha-sama?!" (Shougetsu)

With that trembling voice of hers, Iroha lifted her head and suddenly opened her eyes wide and shouted.

The contents of what she said were hard to understand, and Misura, Izumo, and Shougetsu call back at her worried.

"Ein-Khalif; I will give you Hotarumaru. That's why...protect...protect the people that are important to me!!" (Iroha)

"Iroha-sama? What's that about Ein-Khalif?" (Shougetsu)

Shougetsu directs his attention at the sword that was inside the katana bag on his back as he asks Iroha.

Ein-Khalif.

They took it with them with her request at the hotel. A sword that was said to have been used by an ancient swordsman and to judge the end.

(Keke, understood. As of this moment, I will consider you my present master as per contract. I will be eating that exquisite sword Hotarumaru right now, okay?) (Ein-Khalif)

The voice that Iroha had suddenly begun to hear recently and could only be heard by her says this in a happy tone of voice along with the words

contract.

(It has been long since my last fight. My master is lacking in blood and heart but...I am a piece of crap that has forgotten how to hold back. Let's have her get used to it with all I have!) (Ein-Khalif)

“Uo?!” (Shougetsu)

The katana bag that was at the back of Shougetsu had blown open.

The handle of the katana fell onto the hands of Iroha, and the sword for protection, Hotarumaru, that was hanging at her waist released green light as it disappeared.

(U~h, what a delicacy~~~!! Let's go all jilly-jolly on this people from the very beginning!!!) (Ein-Khalif)

“Munching?”

The sword in Iroha's hand didn't have the blade part.

“What?! The two archers and the mage have suddenly fallen!” (Amelia)

Amelia confirmed both sides and announces that the enemies have collapsed.

“Izumo-sama! I have made a contract with Ein-Khalif! The blade that is flying at high speed is not an enemy! I will also...fight!!” (Iroha)

“Small blade?! Wait, it is true that there's something moving. It is fast, moreover, I don't know how many there are, but if it is not an enemy... Jin!” (Izumo)

Daena glances at Jin.

They should utilize it.

They are already in a state where they can't fight long, and unless they use whatever they can, they won't survive.

It is a dangerous thought that might bring them down a trap with a single wrong step, but that's how at their wit's end they are right now.

“...Understood! Princess-sama, you have our gratitude! Everyone, we are cutting through! At any rate, we have to reorganize or it will definitely be

bad!!” (Jin)

“Aerial, [Critical Bind]!” (Izumo)

Jin understood that the party was not coordinated. Even so, it wasn't a situation where they could take time for a strategy meeting.

If the battle will continue mercilessly even if they are at their limits, they have to take off even if a bit of that messiness inside the party or there won't be a future.

The big move of Izumo had restrained the two enemies at the front for a few seconds. That was plenty enough.

Believing in the attack of the blade that is flying around, Jin and Daena bring down one. The remaining one was attacked by the flying blade and died.

“Iroha.”

At that moment, the voice of a woman resonated.

A clear voice.

It was by no means loud.

The shout of Iroha not that long ago was a lot louder than that, and yet, this particular voice resonated inside the ears of everyone.

Everyone looked up with conviction that someone was there.

The back of Misura had shivers run violently down his spine.

That memory at the lake where he felt this kind of sensation had resurfaced.

The shadow of a person holding a weapon that looked like a spear had come down.

The falling point was where Iroha is.

Jin and Daena noticed this instantly, utilized body enhancement, kicked the wall at their sides, and moved in order to intercept her in midair.

No, they tried to move.

“Splendid. You are still young, and yet, you are working really hard. I love those kind of kids. That’s why this is regretting.”

“Jin, Daena!! Don’t do it, don’t move!!” (Misura)

A shrill shout that Misura hadn’t let out before in his life reverberated, and the movements of Jin and Daena stopped as if they had been hit by lightning.

“Yuno!!” (Misura)

The shadow that was falling at high speed shook the tip of the spear-looking weapon slightly.

‘Intercepting her with those two would be bad’, was the presentiment of Misura as he barely managed to call the name of Yuno.

It was a gamble whether she would move or not.

“Okay!” (Yuno)

Answering immediately, Yuno lunges onto the shadow with the supplemental strength provided by her armor.

It was slightly different from what Misura wanted, but the reaction was plenty enough to award a passing grade.

Silently sending praise to Yuno, Misura used those few seconds to activate his skill.

“[Carnage Heart]!” (Misura)

An inherent skill even when he is so young.

He learned this in the harsh training of Tomoe, and it was the one thing this modest man could boast of.

A special ability that only he possesses in this world.

Misura hasn’t noticed that.

Because he is surrounded by geniuses like Jin and the others, he hasn’t noticed that -currently-he possesses the power that is closest to that of a brave.

Calling the name of the skill, even when he saw Yuno being blown away to the side by a single swing of the shadow, Misura didn't move to save her at all.

Iroha, who was at his side a while ago, had already been taken by Izumo to a wall faraway where Jin, Shougetsu, and the others are.

"How manly. Most of the people that call themselves warriors of Lorel should learn from you."

Misura who had swung his greatsword from below in order to divert the spear had once again heard her voice.

When looking at her up-close, you could tell that her body was injured more than that of Misura, and yet, the thrusts that she unleashed were sharp to a scary extent and refined.

Misura, who was sure that the greatsword had made contact, didn't feel the sensation of having clashed blades with her in his hands.

It felt as if it wasn't a weapon but a snake coiling around it, a strange sensation that made Misura forget to even breathe and had robbed him of words.

Unable to even do the action of drawing back, Misura's chest was being drawn into the blade.

Even if it was a cheap one, it was still a metallic armor made by dwarfs, but it didn't show any resistance as it was penetrated.

"Wuuuoooo!!"

"..."

A side sweep with all of his strength.

A move by Misura.

It is true that his chest had been pierced and he had swung his greatsword just like that.

The woman was making a puzzled expression as she uses the other hand that's holding the naginata to separate it, and attacked as she pulled

back, lightly jumping backwards.

Misura had received a fatal wound on his neck as a parting gift from her, but he also followed the moves of her and falls back close to where his comrade are.

“I will take care of Misura! Sif, help Yuno!” (Amelia)

“Okay!” (Sif)

Amelia who knew about the situation entered to action a second faster than the others.

His body was pierced and his neck was cut open.

If his skill were to run out and his body were to reflect the damage, Misura would die instantly.

“Aaah...” (Iroha)

“Could it really be...” (Shougetsu)

Iroha and Shougetsu saw the face of the attacker and their expressions distorted.

“...This is strange. The double strike should have been an attack that brings death. Your defense is still rough in the edges and is not on the level where you can stand in my way...and yet, you are still alive.”

“...Hah...hah...”

“Even so, you haven’t done anything to my naginata. This is a bit... interesting. Just like that Golem-like girl from before.”

The woman smiles.

An overflowing smile that doesn’t belong in the battlefield.

Her armor is in tatters and her whole body is smeared in blood. She has several sword injuries, and, as if she had fought against a wild animal, she also had claw injuries and torn up areas.

Even when she was so heavily injured, her bearing showed leisure to the extreme.

It was truly an unbalanced sight.

“Mother...Mother.” (Iroha)

“Haruka-sama. Why are you burning the city and chasing after Iroha-sama?” (Shougetsu)

“Ah, right. Iroha, your mother has come to get you. There’s no need to do a marriage that you don’t wish for. I don’t want you to end up like me. And Shougetsu, good work on looking after Iroha. Stand back now.” (Haruka)

“Haruka-sama!” (Shougetsu)

“If you don’t stand back, I myself will grant you eternal respite. You have worked well. Your brother will be waiting for you there.” (Haruka)

“?!”

“Sorry but! We are here too, you know. If you only want to meddle with the future of your child, draw back and just get your injuries treated. My important friends are risking their life here. We also have no intentions of withdrawing!!” (Misura)

Misura points his greatsword at Haruka.

“I see. It was foolhardiness huh. In that case...there’s no choice.” (Haruka)

(I am a shield. I can’t let anyone get pass me, and most of all, I have to continue taking the blade of the opponent. I definitely won’t let my comrades die before me!) (Misura)

With heroic resolve, Misura provokes Haruka in order to have her attention directed at him.

In an instant...a number of sparkles were visible at the surroundings of Haruka.

“Ah.”

The voices of Jin and Daena overlap. They were completely caught off-guard.

The small blades that Iroha spoke of attacked Haruka with the intent of cutting her down.

“Annoying.” (Haruka)

“?!!”

With the two naginatas, Haruka strikes down all the many blades.

Those moves were at a speed that even Daena was unable to catch.

Gulping their breaths was a reaction they couldn't help.

The blades that were as big as an adult finger had dropped onto the ground and soon went and gathered back to where Iroha is, turning into the blade of Ein-Khalif.

“...Fuh~. Understood. So you won't be hearing what your mother says unless you feel some pain huh. What a troublesome child.” (Haruka)

Haruka takes a stance with her two naginatas.

“Oi, Izumo. Is that really just a mom?” (Jin)

“There's no doubt that that's the mother of the princess, but I don't know if the word 'just' can be used for her. She is a brave woman that is called things like Vessel of Thousand Monsters and War Beast. She apparently has long since finished her active days, but it looks like that doesn't matter.” (Izumo)

“How dare you damage my Juuki!” (Yuno) <AN: Juuki is the name of the armor. It was first named as Yunbo, but due to circumstances it was changed.> <TLN: I want to believe that it is a reference to the Yandere of Origin.>

“...I know that we definitely wouldn't be able to defeat her in normal circumstances, but Sensei and the others are surely close by. Also, Lime-san and the other woman have fought her and have weakened her to this extent. I don't know what will happen in the next minutes, but...we have no choice but to do it.” (Jin)

Seeing that the armor of Yuno had been cracked, they were dumbfounded, but Jin says these words to his comrades, and most

importantly, to himself.

Also, if Raidou -their mentor-makes it in time, they win.

If they get overtaken before that happens...everything's over.

While being grateful to their teacher for beating into them, not fights in perfect condition but fights that push them to their limits, Jin and the others resolve themselves.

Chapter 295: Izumo's resolve, Haruka's resolve

"You can still stand up huh." (Haruka)

There was only one boy that is standing by relying on a staff and a katana. Looking at the figure of this boy, Haruka lets out a heavy sigh.

The words that followed after held no ridicule and you can tell there's confusion in it.

Even now, the eyes of the boy still release strong will.

That boy is Izumo Ikusabe.

Jin and Daena were overwhelmed by the difference in technique, but they fought bravely. Without forgetting about their teamwork with the backlines, they resolutely faced an enemy they couldn't defeat with their own ability.

Amelia and Sif also didn't make any mistakes. Or rather, they showed a miracle-like fight. Those girls who showed strength that far surpassed their actual ability should be commended for it.

Misura, with a special ability and tenacious spirit to endure, exposed his body to the attacks of Haruka to the bitter end.

And then, there's Yuno. She learned a variety of things from Misura in the middle of the battle and became a tough shield for the backlines as well as coordinating with them to increase the firepower.

The user of Ein-Khalif, or more like, the person that was participating in the fight with it as her proxy, Iroha, also lasted till her last attack.

Being able to maintain a strong heart until then is also something that should be commended.

The failure of the wave attack had severed her connection with it and she lost consciousness, but no one can blame her for that. The Ein-Khalif in her hands had returned to the appearance of a normal sword and already didn't move a single bit.

A secluded girl like her that hasn't experienced a battlefield before managed to stay conscious for so long because of the existence of Izumo.

Due to the violent attacks of Haruka that came often, the bodyguards of Iroha -Akashi and Yuduki-as well as Shougetsu had already fallen.

This situation could be called many things.

Wiped out.

Crushing defeat.

There was only one backline magician barely standing, but aside from that, there was no one else left.

The others are still alive –but they are unconscious.

Their life-or-death was already being grasped by Haruka.

“That just a while ago was...the everything of you people but...are you telling me you still have more to show me?” (Haruka) ‘That’.

The ‘that’ Haruka was referring to was the attack that Jin and the others squeezed their all to do.

The few seconds that the frontline gained with their bodies on the line, Amelia used them to cast enhancement magic on the combined element magic of Sif.

Yuno utilized that power to release a big move ‘Red Salamander’.

After shouting: ‘If we can't bring you down from above, we will break you from below!’, the combined element magic that Sif released had changed the form of the armor of Yuno, Juuki, but this powerful combo technique was deflected by Haruka.

Faced with the retaliation of Haruka, Juuki was completely destroyed and there wasn't a single person who had the leeway to catch the falling Yuno. There was also no one who could go against the Haruka that summoned mamonos from the sky.

And so, it leads to now.

“That's why you pushed to end us...like toys you have gotten bored of.”

(Izumo) “‘Toys you got bored of’, that’s quite the self-deprecating way of speaking.” (Haruka) “...Don’t underestimate us.” (Izumo)

“...”

“Don’t underestimate us! What’s with this!! We...we were doing our very best! Even if you are stronger, I will never forgive an act like making fun of them!” (Izumo) “Make fun of them? I had no such intentions, child of the military family Ikusabe. Just that—” (Haruka) “My comrades and I had the resolve in this fight!!” (Izumo) “That’s simply delirious talk from the weak.” (Haruka) “!!”

“I had no obligation of doing my best to answer to your resolve.” (Haruka) “Why...? Aren’t you a warrior?! Is ridiculing the people who do their best something that a warrior would do?! I have not been taught that by no one! Not my sword master, or my magic master, or anyone from my household. And I feel pride from that!” (Izumo) Izumo’s expression was distorted in anger.

Even Iroha had chosen to clash blades with her mother.

Izumo wouldn’t allow anyone to dare say that there was no resolve in that.

He wouldn’t let that happen.

The attack of Ein-Khalif that she used was vicious. Leaving aside how much Iroha herself was able to control that, it was an attack that showed absolutely no signs of holding back.

Her expression also showed no hesitation. She had a strong face as she viewed the attack towards her mother –without showing a single sign of bitterness.

Izumo was deeply moved by the strong resolve of Iroha.

“I definitely won’t acknowledge you!” (Izumo)

“Stop it already. There’s no way you don’t know that you have been shaving off your life as you wring out magic power, right? No matter how much power you bring out, I can summon mamonos that can serve as

shield and mamonos that can interrupt your aria. It is an ability that's said to have been used by the Wise Tokito-sama, called

[Hyakki Yagyo](#)." (Haruka) "I know, you can use it as a Rebound Person. That doesn't matter anymore." (Izumo) Izumo also understands.

Osakabe Haruka is a Rebound Person. Moreover, an abnormal Rebound Person that possesses several Wise powers.

She might even be stronger than a Wise.

But even if that's the case, Izumo has absolutely no intentions of changing his plans.

"...If you still have something you want to do, go ahead." (Haruka) "..."

"If that's the way you want to use your life, go ahead. Do it." (Haruka) "... Is that your way of pity?" (Izumo)

Izumo grips his staff and katana.

He was bringing out dangerous magic power from inside of him and shaping it.

"Fighting is by no means something that I find fun. What role did God give to me when it granted these many powers to this body..." (Haruka) Haruka wasn't showing a single trace of feeling danger.

"Then watch. I will be showing you right now what lies beyond the power of a military household!" (Izumo) Finishing his calculations, he spreads many fragments of arias.

Multiple magic activation, a technique that is passed down and classified as a special move by the military family.

(Fourteen activations of 'Garuda Tempest' and four 'Dust Wings'. It should look beautiful.) (Izumo) Fully on the know of what will come out, Izumo gathers more aria fragments.

"Well, leave that for later, okay?"

A voice suddenly resounded.

But that wasn't an unfamiliar voice for Izumo. Or more like, the moment

Izumo heard it, he felt as if he would lose all strength out of relief.

—A voice he has been waiting for eagerly.

“...Wa?”

The voice that Haruka heard right in front of her was from someone Izumo knows.

The dumbfounded voice he let out was a reaction after seeing the shining needle pierced in the neck of Haruka.

“Who goes there!” (Haruka)

“Woah now.”

Without caring about Izumo, Haruka’s naginata leaves a shiny trail as she turns around, but the person easily jumped away from it and stands in the middle of Izumo and Haruka.

“Sensei?” (Izumo)

“Yeah.” (Makoto)

The quest has been accomplished.

Even if this was the result of them being made light of, no one died.

‘Ah, with this, I can let go of my consciousness’, is what Izumo thought as his knees hit the ground.

It must have also been the backlash of him exploding with the most anger he have had to feel in his whole life until now.

But, sadly, their Sensei won’t be easy-going.

“Sensei. Then...you are Raidou?” (Haruka)

The state of Haruka made a complete turn.

Bloodthirst that would make you shiver was released in an instant from her whole body.

The magic power needle made a small sound as it broke.

“...Right. Izumo.” (Makoto)

“Y-Yes?!” (Izumo)

“Wake up everyone and watch.” (Makoto)

Without turning back, the Sensei says these short words and faces Haruka.

Osakabe Haruka tried to receive everything that Jin and the others brought out.

She was trying to bring out their power as she hurt them to an extent where she wouldn't kill them.

A delicate job that required the highest of care.

Their anger, bloodthirst, and the many miracle-like techniques that these young group of talents were giving birth to; she received them all and crushed them.

That's how it looked to me.

And that delayed it enough for me to intervene.

In other words, it could be that.....ah...this is hard to deal with. Even if it is something that I have decided on, I wonder if this really is the correct choice.

Fighting really doesn't bring out anything good.

“The enemy of Tomoki-sama; the one who injured his personage...is how I should think of it, right?” (Haruka) “You can.” (Makoto)

Was it at the time she fought Lime and Levi? Or maybe after seeing the fight of Jin and the others?

It...couldn't have been at the time when she killed Kougetsu-san.

At that time, I thought we were too late, but due to the power-up of Tomoe's illusions, it seems she can even interfere with the boundary between life-and-death.

After reviving the whole unit, we have had them cooperate for the time being.

...But she sulked quite a lot though.

‘I will become lad Kosugi~~!!’, is still burned in my mind. <Take this one with a grain of salt.> “Fufu, so the one I was looking for has finally appeared. Moreover, it looks like you are pretty strong.” (Haruka) Haruka-san rubs the back of her neck.

How did she nullify the needle?

If it's her who possesses several Wise abilities...ah, it is this one huh.

Investigating with ‘Sakai’, I gather detailed information of her.

This person has quite a lot of real combat experience and is quite strong.

“It is called Wings of the Saint.” (Haruka)

“...”

So she already knew that I was investigating her and about the result as well huh.

That's right, Wings of the Saint; the last power that she hadn't displayed until now.

“Because of this, fighting had become nothing short of boring.” (Haruka) Because of that huh.

“Must have been. A Wise power that activates the moment you receive a certain amount of damage or are afflicted by a status effect that affects your life.” (Makoto) And after activating, all damage will be healed and you receive a permanent resistance against that status effect.

It truly is an unbelievable power fitting of its name.

Get injured for long, and in time, become immortal huh.

Was that the power of a brave of that era, or maybe a Wise of reputation?

“How scary. It is correct. It also heals wounds and poison disappears.” (Haruka) “...No way. That's cheating.” (Izumo)

I heard the pained voice of Izumo coming from my back.

Looks like Jin and the others have woken up. They are making noise.

“ So, what will you do? That mysterious needle attack of yours won’t work on me anymore. This is the first time I have had Wings of the Saint activate with a single attack though.” (Haruka) “Of course, I will be incapacitating you.” (Makoto) I glance at my students.

Jin, Daena, Misura, Amelia, Sif, Yuno...and Izumo.

They have...truly become strong.

Just how much experience have they gained in this short amount of time.

I couldn’t understand the reason of them being here until I saw it directly with my eyes.

I even thought it could have been a mistake that stemmed from Shiki indulging the selfishness of Izumo.

No, if we think about the danger, my thinking is correct.

But that’s not it –it wasn’t solely a mistake.

They have already grown a lot more than someone like me.

I am simply a teacher though.

Shiki must have talent as a mentor.

“Incapacitate? The more I swing my weapon, the stronger I become; just by receiving an attack, I gain resistance against it; I can’t use big magic, but I can summon a number of mamonos that possess many abilities –you want to incapacitate someone like that? Even if you look around the world, there’s no one who can clash upfront against me.” (Haruka) Haruka-san shows a praiseworthy feat of smiling while not loosening her bloodthirst at all.

...How vain.

“In reality, I have been thinking for a bit. I was wondering if you and I are similar. But it looks like I was wrong.” (Makoto) “That doesn’t answer anything.” (Haruka)

“Haha, you say you have ‘become’ bored?” (Makoto)

“What’s so funny about that?” (Haruka)

“In that case, I might be able to express my gratitude towards you for stimulating the growth of my students.” (Makoto) “...”

“I will make it so your last fight will be slightly fulfilling at the very least.” (Makoto) “?!!”

When I look at Haruka-san, she takes a stance with sharp eyes and points her weapon in my direction.

“Haruka-san.” (Makoto) <Omae wa mou shindeiru.> “What?!” (Haruka)
<Nani?!>

I call her as I stand right before her eyes.

Being suddenly closed in in such a short space of time, she was clearly agitated.

“You see, I...” (Makoto)

I pierce her with a needle.

The needle that had a petrifying effect endowed was pierced in her chest.

“Why?! But!” (Haruka)

The needle crumbles.

It doesn’t matter.

“Things like ‘a fight being fun’...I have never thought of it before. Even the battle trainings, I only do them because they are necessary. No matter if I get injured or not, no matter if it is a complete victory or a crushing defeat; I don’t feel worth in battle. Honestly, inside of me, there’s only the feeling of whether it is necessary or not.” (Makoto) “Are those your words as a warrior?!” (Haruka)

“Is that a joke? This is simply a farewell gift. If Haruka-san is a person that’s fickle about victory or defeat, it is still possible to bring out something that will make fighting worth after all!” (Makoto) This time, I

create a fire needle and attack.

She tries to evade, but it looks like she still has some leeway in her.

Utilizing the power of the red-colored coat, I accelerate without reservation, and break through the evasion and defense of hers that was mixed with hesitation.

“It doesn’t have any effect! Raidou!!” (Haruka)

Two naginatas are swung inside the hot wind.

The trajectory of the blades are on the level of a master, but I am the faster one.

I grab both blades around the base with its respective hand.

“You grabbed it?!” (Haruka)

“It is pure physics. I wonder if you gain complete immunity if you were to be hit with physical damage.” (Makoto) “Wa, guh!!” (Haruka)

I continue by striking her with my Magic Armor.

Aiming up.

The strongest team attack of Jin and the others began just like that.

Was it the ‘Aerial’ of Izumo? That had stayed in my mind, so I might have punched her up unconsciously because of it.

But the figure of Haruka-san in the sky disappears while she was still hanging in the air.

Teleportation?

No, this is...

I move my gaze to the side and I found her using the crumbling rubble of buildings as foothold to jump and approach me.

A feat that’s impossible for a hyuman; ability on the level of a Wise.

Is that the blessing of the ability that enhances the body whenever it receives damage; War Beast?

She is making moves like those of a wild animal.

“Dwell in it, fifteenth beast; the inescapable black thorn, Great Tusk Ogre!” (Haruka) Summoning a familiar and endowing it into her weapon with no aria, just simple words, Haruka-san moved at lightning speed with a blade that’s clad in a black muddy-something and came mowing down at me on both sides.

She said it was inescapable, but it seems possible to evade.

I move back at the place slightly before the two blades intersect.

“I got you!!” (Haruka)

So she had my evasion in mind huh.

The two naginatas became one and was thrust at me who was trying to evade.

A charge that came at me together with her whole body.

The part of the Magic Armor that came in contact with its tip was blown away.

Literally blown away.

Hm~.

I crouch my body; my two legs properly staying on the ground.

Grabbing the naginata that was still clad in a black aura, I pull it towards me.

Now that she was at close range, I create a needle endowed with blast power from my right hand, and pierce it onto the shoulder of Haruka-san.

“...!!”

She is blown to the ground without letting out a single word.

But that’s not the end.

From the dust cloud that was raised, several shadows aside from hers appeared.

So she summoned something again huh.

“Scary. You truly are a scary monster, Raidou. Even so, I won’t be losing.”

(Haruka) I am beginning to feel as if I am being attacked by a zombie.

“Why do you think of something that’s so far from the truth?” (Makoto)
“The Wings of the Saint will remember all of your abilities in time.”

(Haruka) “And?” (Makoto)

“And I am saying that’s the moment where you will be prostrating!”
(Haruka) “If you want to win against me, immortality is not enough.”
(Makoto) I am certain.

If she were really charmed by Tomoki, Jin and the others would have been all killed in just a matter of seconds.

Izumo called it an insult and was angered, but she wouldn’t have let them show their abilities and the limits of their power.

Haruka-san –you, just how did you do it, and when?

Did you undo the charm of Tomoki on your own?

I was thinking this while listening to her frivolous talk.

Chapter 296: The things brought about in battles at utmost limit

I ask myself if this is such a fleeting thing.

Memories of my past surface in my mind...and disappear.

Each time I receive attacks, my whole body is filled with power; every time I attack, I can't injure him –no, not even a single drop of blood flows.

War Beast and Wings of the Saint; both were powers of renowned Wise.

For whatever the reason my blood has brought about, both powers are currently residing in my body.

Not only that, I can even use the summoning power of the Wise Tokito-sama who continuously challenged the Yaso-Katsui Labyrinth on his own, the Hyakki Yagyo.

With these many powers owned by a single entity, an opponent that can stand against me shouldn't exist.

Even when I learned to fight, it only felt empty.

I was only allowed to crush.

Being tossed around by political strifes, my wish of remaining married with my loved one couldn't be fulfilled either.

The thirst for battle smoldered me.

Ah, again.

From that punch I received, there was a magic needle that I couldn't avoid stabbed deep in between my chest.

The needle crumbled and Wings of the Saint granted me further defense and resistance.

Every single attack of this man activates my Wings of the Saint without exception.

If I didn't have this ability, I don't know how many times I would have

been killed already.

How overwhelming.

This avatar of battle that I could even feel fear from.

So it was this fleeting.

Today, I...will be dying.

In front of my daughter Iroha.

As a fool that drowned in fake love.

What confirmed my own end was...a smile.

The ends of my mouth had unconsciously turned upwards.

Maybe it was the gratitude of being able to die after bringing out my all, or it might be joy. It could be the irony that I, who could only crush, was now the one being crushed.

Ah...in the end, I will be leaving without understanding this thing called battle huh.

Whatever the case, for me, my encounter with this young man is.....



The fire breath of the fire maned lion had flown into where Jin and others are.

Around 10 minutes after the arrival of Tomoe, Mio had also regrouped, and she dispersed those flames with a single swing of her fan.

There's Tomoe and Mio by the side of Iroha-chan and the others, so there's practically no need to worry about them anymore.

I have already shot through the lion and it has dispersed.

My feet touch the ground after a while of fighting in midair, and then, I look up –at Haruka-san that is looking down directly at me with her loyal mamonos.

The mamonos were varied; from oriental-like to western-like. There were some who were floating in the air, and some who were placing their

feet on the rubble and glaring at me.

There's also some who are erasing their presence and hiding in the shadows.

...And well, there's the ones that I have already eliminated.

"How is it? At the very least...you are not getting bored, are you?"
(Makoto) There was no response from her.

Instead of that, the naginata held in both of her hands shines.

Two slashes that felt as if they had been swung right at my vicinity were released, but they didn't manage to hit my body and, after making a slightly high-pitched sound, they disappear.

On the other side, Tomoe and Mio had finished treating the subordinates of Iroha-chan, and were now simply watching my battle between Haruka-san without saying anything.

They are not going to interfere.

"Oh?"

"...Hm."

Looks like a number of mamonos were about to change their properties from spiritual to material.

It must have been an order from Haruka-san, but I won't allow that.

I skewer from below the cockroach and centipede at the sides before they manage to do anything.

I have mostly grasped the abilities of the mamonos and the time they take to be resummoned, as well as the fitting way of dealing with them.

Leaving aside whether Haruka-san has noticed this, I can see to a certain extent that the Wings of the Saint is reaching its end.

Haruka-san should have a lower ability at grasping the situation than I do, but she most likely can tell that the current situation is not good.

In that case, what she should have the most expectations of in order to change the current state of affairs would be the army of thousands that is

approaching Kannaoui from outside.

The chaos that they would create would probably be the only possibility she has right now.

“?!”

“Ah...Rokuya-san huh. This is incredible.” (Makoto)

Well, that’s what I thought, but the outside of the city also showed movements.

When I look at Tomoe and Mio, the two were furrowing their brows.

“Rokuya? Are you saying that legendary assassin has appeared?”
(Haruka) Looks like Haruka-san had an idea of the name that I had muttered.

Instead of answering her, I place strength in my legs and close the distance between us.

She probably sensed it before I stepped in, she evaded heavily to the right, but I create a scaffold and pursue her.

With a straight movement that was faster than her, I easily pierce a needle between her chest.

Haruka-san’s body shines and the needle crumbles.

It is a spectacle that I am already tired of seeing.

I stand at the mid-air scaffold and look at her who is biting her lips.

“So it seems. That person truly surprises me. To think he had such a hidden trump card.” (Makoto) Leaving aside Rokuya’s affinity against me, he is quite strong.

And he is quite the ruffian.

This power that is being shown to me...I see, it is indeed true that it is something that would have been pointless in the battle underground.

But against many, it can be said to be an incredibly fitting ability.

Even though he is an assassin, he can fight an army on his own.

Truly a brave that would make strategists cry.

(I think you already know, but...) (Rokuya)

A thought transmission from Rokuya-san.

There's only one voice.

Of course, I already know.

The presence of Rokuya-san had diffused outside the city, and after that, it increased in numbers –the numbers were exactly...eighty thousand.

(This is one of my hidden trump cards. God of War. Change my body to an army of eighty thousands, but their individual strengths are 1/10th of my original strength. Moreover, it is a troublesome ability that took me close to a century to learn how to control and utilize. Against mighty opponents, it would instead bring about danger, but against an army that's comprised of normal soldiers, it is quite the important ability.) (Rokuya) Rokuya thoroughly explains me his ability.

Rather than the details of his ability, what interests me more are the circumstances in which made him wish for such an ability though.

There was no explanation in that regards.

"You simply became a weakling and increased in numbers..... Even if you show us something like that, it is not interesting at all." (Mio) Mio gives out incredibly harsh criticism.

Looks like what Rokuya-san had whispered to Mio before wasn't about showing this ability.

(Hahaha. But, unless I am wiped out, there won't be any serious wound dealt to me, and it takes 10 days to recast it. There have been an unexpectedly good amount of times in which I have been saved by this ability. Especially in times when numbers become strength. It is a tactic that you wouldn't normally see in Kuzunoha Company that is more about quality than quantity, right?) (Rokuya) (True. Twenty thousand respectively at the east, west, south, and north. If Rokuya-san alone can control all directions, the amount of violence it can cause with just the

sheer numbers is nightmarish.) (Makoto) (As expected of Makoto-kun. You understand. So, leave the outside to me. Now then, see ya later.) (Rokuya)

The presence of Rokuya-san disappears.

Power in numbers huh.

It is true that in Asora and in the Kuzunoha Company, our common policy is to thoroughly increase the quality.

That's why I might have been neglecting a bit the power that numbers can provide.

Now that I think about it, in the underground battle, it was the same.

I might have to take into consideration the people, things, and the amount of material resources before confronting the Goddess.

Now then, let's leave this as one thing I should do when I return.

The Wings of the Saint of Haruka-san will be ending in one or two times more.

I don't know what will happen after.

If it would leave her in a state of apparent death, that would be the best, but who knows.

"Fire Demonic Being, [Fiery Chariot's Gun]!!" (Haruka)

As expected of the ability of a Wise.

Names I feel I have heard before were coming out pretty frequently from her mouth.

I think I heard about this Fire Demonic Being from my recently joined follower, Tamaki, who is in charge of the mysterious. With her usual 'In the past~~I was called like this...'.

All she says sounds strangely doubtful, you know.

Haruka-san summons three new mamonos and charges towards me with two of them in tow -and her naginata in both hands that I have deliberately not destroyed yet.

Uhm...the one that remained was probably the Fiery Chariot?

I thought it was a fire chariot, but it looks like that wasn't the case.

I won't be countering or fighting back; if you want to do something, go ahead and do it.

Will it be some type of new skill, or maybe a team attack that was born from a revelation?

Taking pointers from it doesn't sound bad.

I am someone that doesn't feel worth about fighting in itself, but if it is Haruka-san who seems to feel worth in bringing out her all, she might be able to find something here.

"[Demonic Space]!" (Haruka)

A whole side of my vision was dyed in darkness.

I couldn't see Haruka-san anymore, and the only thing I felt was that my Magic Armor had been attacked.

Is this an anti-magic attack?

My Magic Armor had crumbled way too easily.

I felt like it was different from the time with Azu-san. It felt as if it were a specialized skill.

"[Anesthetic Slash]!" (Haruka)

This time, I felt like my arm was cut.

Though it wasn't my exposed skin that was aimed at, but an attack that I felt from on top of my coat.

Maybe this darkness is also affecting Haruka-san slightly.

Her combat sense is incredibly high.

If I had the same abilities and speed as her and we were to have a close combat battle, I would have been one-sidedly beaten up.

But maybe because I have recently fought against a knight that's more frightening than her, I don't feel much danger.

I have gotten a sliver of courage from it.

I think that, if it is now, a match with Hibiki-senpai won't go the same way.

"Did you absorb a bit of my magic power?" (Makoto)

That's how it felt.

The second attack didn't injure me, but I could feel that a bit of my magic power was stolen.

The two attacks were probably a team attack with the mamonos she had with her, but...I don't think that kind of attack is that effective on me...

The darkness steadily disperses.

Now the only thing that remains is the team attack with the Fiery Chariot huh.

"Oh?" (Mio)

"Uooooo!!" (Tomoe)

I could hear Tomoe's shout of high excitement from below.

For some reason, Mio was overflowing with a displeased aura.

This happened right before my body was caught by a white something.

I was more interested in the identity of it than escaping from its grasp, so I didn't try to get out.

"Come, Gashadokuro <Starving Skeleton>! Strike your enemy with those grudges of yours!!" (Haruka) The upper body of a...giant skeleton huh.

I see. I certainly have seen that kind of youkai a number of times.

That Tomoe...she was happy that she was able to see a japanese youkai from up-close huh.

It is true that the Hyakki Yakou is pretty renowned in my world.

Hah...

A bit further away from me, three giant skeletons were floating at my surroundings, and one of them had restrained me with both hands.

The other two were letting out a purple aura that didn't look gentle at all and were punching me like crazy without caring about their comrade's arms.

Looks like they rank in the strong area within the youkais (or mamonos?) until now.

Is this not a simple summoning?

Maybe this is the ability of the Fiery Chariot?

I don't know at all.

I don't understand why Mio is in a bad mood either.

But...when I bring my gaze up while being punched, I could see that it was night and there's a bright moon in the sky.

A night view that was truly fitting for many youkais to run rampant with that light that shines in a somewhat mysterious manner.

Ah, since I have the chance, how about I try it?

It did succeed when I tested it in Asora.

This technique that was born from my interests, and a slightly bit from my desire to get back at that Goddess.

Well, if it doesn't work, I just have to properly train again at Asora. There's Tomoe here, so we can also have Shiki and Tamaki think about the reason why it failed if it actually does.

In a different manner than when I speak normally, visualizing as if I am having having a conversation with someone of another race, I speak while still looking up.

"Moon." (Makoto)

"Uh?! This is...! An aria?! How discomfoting it is...!" (Haruka) If you are not used to hearing it, it would probably feel that way.

My followers had also frowned the first time they witnessed this.

This power of 'comprehension' that the Goddess pushed onto me in order to have me interact with other races at the time when I had just

arrived in this world. Later, even though it was something I wished for, the Goddess gave me a life-risking update of the 'comprehension', and it apparently became a part of this thing called 'wisdom' that was inside of me.

—This is something that I heard from the other Gods, but they are definitely more trustworthy than that Bug Goddess.

“My enemy and the temporary lives that she has created...” (Makoto) It is normally an ability that activates on its own and allows for conversation, but I can also activate it on my own will towards the targets I wish to communicate to.

Just by speaking, my surroundings apparently hear it as an incredibly complicated and unknown aria language.

That's right, this is a magic aria.

It has the effect of buffing, debuffing, and destroying, but the point that should be paid attention the most is that it can be activated at a wide range and can choose the target.

In other words, its affinity with Sakai is destructively good.

That's a matter of course.

If I remember correctly, Shiki was so excited, saying he didn't know about this and had never even heard about this before either.

I don't really care much if this is the discovery of a new element.

The element of the spell I will be using is just as I announced at first — Moon.

“Shoot them down equally.” (Makoto)

The end of my aria.

I wonder if it will succeed.

It succeeded with the moon of Asora.

‘You can even drop meteors in this world, so wouldn't it be possible for the Moon element to exist?’, that's the kind of thought process I had when

I approached this.

Then, the effect on the moon in the world of the Goddess is...

“So you answered me huh. This is interesting.” (Makoto)

A red moon suspended high up –at its surroundings, light rings of the same color were made; they slowly widen, and create a marvellous view.

They target the Gashadokuros first, and then, Haruka-san and the other ones created by Hyakki Yakou as well.

“...[Lunar Halo]” (Makoto)

I mutter shortly the name of the spell.

As if they had been waiting for that signal, the red rings that were shining with a somewhat rainbow tint...burst.

They rain down incessantly.

Rain down.

Rain down.

Rain down.

Rain down.

Just like an object dropping from space, they dropped at an unimaginable speed, but their light didn't burn out in the middle of their drop.

A fragment of moonlight had hit Haruka-san, and the remaining ones pierce the Hyakki Yakou one after the other.

And yet, that light didn't hit Tomoe, Mio, Jin's group, and not even the rubble was being destroyed.

It was truly accommodating.

And most importantly, it was a big harvest that I was able to confirm that I can use the Moon element (not yet decided if it should be called that way) in this world.

The sounds of the surroundings stopped.

Witnessing a phenomenon of that level, they can't resume battle immediately huh.

It has been a while since I have been able to enjoy the silence of the night.

"I see, so this is the completed version huh."

"..."

Haruka-san looks straight at me in the sky.

All mamonos have already been eliminated.

Those eyes of hers shone a golden light, but there was no magic power or fighting spirit from her body, yet, that abnormal golden light was rising up.

The Wings of the Saint lets out the same color as Root huh.

"What an almighty feeling. To think there would be such a level of power in this world." (Haruka) This is the last strengthening she is receiving after being hit by the lunar halo.

If Haruka-san is bringing out the last of her strength, that would be the best scenario, but...no, there's something strange.

That's not all there is to it.

I feel a different being in her.

Suddenly...my spine shivers.

Some sort of power was given to Haruka-san right in the last moments of Wings of the Saint?

In other words, someone who is good at peeking and has been watching the battle?

...I see. So they finally couldn't endure it any longer huh.

I think of a certain possibility.

A pressure as if I were confronting a Tomoe or Mio that has taken off their limiter and is going berserk –or maybe, even more than that?

Someone that can provide this much power to a human. I can assert to it.

There's by no means many who would be able to do that.

"Raidou, I have surpassed your calculations." (Haruka)

"...With the assistance of someone?" (Makoto)

"Who knows. But with this, I will surely be able to teach you about this thing called battle." (Haruka) "Too bad. I would prefer an answer to my question rather than battling though." (Makoto) "In that case, seek it. But..." (Haruka)

"..."

"With your life at stake!" (Haruka)

Life?

...

Sorry, but I can't give you that.

It might be a bit of a pain, but...let's do it.

I will reach an answer with my own hands.

And then, if her change was something brought by the Goddess...I will be having a preliminary match here.

Credits

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